

THREE
Practical ESSAYS,
ON
BAPTISM,
CONFIRMATION,
AND
REPENTANCE.

CONTAINING
Full Instructions for a Holy Life: With
Earnest Exhortations, especially to young
Persons, drawn from the Consideration of
the Severity of the Discipline of the Pri-
mitive Church.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

By SAMUEL CLARKE, D. D.
late Rector of St. James's Westminster. / 8

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THE PREFACE.



T. Chrysoftom observes concerning the antient Hereticks, that tho' their Opinions were never so widely different both from the Truth and from each Other, yet every one pretended that his particular Opinion was agreeable to the Scripture and founded in it; and that all different Opinions were discountenanced by it, and might be confuted out of it. He observes further, That the true Reason of this their Confidence was, because every one picked out of the Scripture all those Passages, which according to the Letter and Sound of the Words seemed to favour his particular Opinion, without regarding their Coherence and Connexion, or the Occasion and Design of their being written. Thus from those Passages which speak of Christ as a Man, and in his State of Humiliation, some were so unreasonable as to collect that he was but a meer Man, and so denied his Divinity: Others on the contrary from those Passages which speak of him as God and in his state of Exaltation, did as weakly take occasion to deny his Humanity;

asserting that the humane Nature was wholly swallowed up by the Divine.

I wish the same Observation might not too truly be made, of most of the later Disputes which have arisen among Christians in our Days. For thus I believe, if we search on the one hand into the Ground of many of those Mens Assertions, who love to aggravate the Corruption of humane Nature, and the natural Misery of Mankind; we shall find the true Foundation of them to be the applying those Places of Scripture to the whole Bulk of Mankind, which are evidently and expressly spoken of some of the worst of Men: On the other hand, the Reason why others have so magnified the natural Faculties of Men, as to seem to have diminished from the Grace of God, is, because they applied those Texts to the generality of Men, which are meant only of the most perfect Christians. Again, the Foundation of those Mens Opinions, who have extolled some one particular Virtue, in opposition to, or as an equivalent for all other Duties, is, their having interpreted those Places of Scripture concerning some one particular Virtue, which are plainly meant of the whole Christian Religion: And the Reason why others have thought no moral Virtues at all, necessary to be practised by Believers, is, because they have applied those Texts to the most Essential and Fundamental Duties of the Christian Religion, which were intended only of the Ceremonial Performances of the Jewish Law.

And

The PREFACE.

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And thus, to come to the Subject of our present Discourses ; in the great Business of Repentance and Conversion ; the Reason why some Men have attributed the whole of Man's Conversion to such an extraordinary and uncertain Grace of God, as has given Men occasion to sit still in their Sins, in expectation of the Time when this extraordinary Grace should be poured down upon them ; is, because They have fixed that Assistance of God's Grace to an uncertain Period, which God himself has constantly annexed to his Ordinances ; and which he certainly bestows upon Men at their Baptism, or at their solemn taking upon themselves the Profession of Religion. And the Reason why others have made Repentance so short and so easie a Business, is, because they have too largely applied those great Promises in the Gospel, to the circular and repeated Repentances of Christians, which are, at least in some measure, confined to the great Repentance or Conversion of Unbelievers.

My Design in the following Essays, is, to endeavour briefly to set this great and most important Matter in its true Light ; from the Analogy of Scripture ; and from the Sense of the purest Ages of the Primitive Church. To show that at Baptism God always bestows that Grace, which is necessary to enable Men to perform their Duty ; and that to those who are Baptized in their Infancy, this Grace is sealed and assured at Confirmation. That from hence-

forward Men are bound, with that Assistance, to live in the constant Practice of their known Duty, and are not to expect (except in extraordinary Cases) any extraordinary, much less irresistible Grace, to preserve them in their Duty, or to convert them from Sin: That if after this they fall into any great Wickedness, they are bound to a proportionably great and particular Repentance. And that as the Gospel hath given sufficient Assurance of such Repentance being accepted, to comfort and encourage all true Penitents; so it has sufficiently shown the Difficulty of it at all Times, and the extreme Danger of it when late, to deter Men from delaying it when they are convinced of its Necessity, and from adding to their Sins when they hope to have them forgiven.

There is nothing with which the Devil more effectually imposes upon Men in these latter Ages of the World, than with false Notions of Repentance. And if it must be confessed that many in the Primitive Times were too severe in their Apprehensions concerning it, 'tis certain there are many more in our Days not severe enough. At least, I am sure there is no Man who has a true Sense of Religion, and a just Apprehension of the vast Concern of eternal Happiness or Misery, but will be much more desirous to know the utmost Strictness of the Conditions upon which so mighty a Stake depends, than to run the hazard of being mistaken in judging too loosely of them.



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ESSAY the First.
Of BAPTISM.

CHAP. I.

Of Baptism in general.



BAPTISM is the Rite, whereby those who believe in *Christ*, are solemnly admitted to be Members of the *Christian Church*. What the first Original of Baptizing with Water was; how the *Jews* used to Baptize their Profelytes, and the Heathens those who were to be initiated to any sacred Function; I shall not now enquire. Sufficient it is to our present Purpose, that our Saviour has instituted this Sacrament, as a Rite whereby Converts at their Admission into his Church, do solemnly oblige themselves to live suitably to the Profession they then enter into; and whereby they are intitled to all the Bene-

fits and Privileges belonging to the Society into which they are admitted.

2. This *Baptism* is either, 1. *Of Persons of riper Years*; or, 2. *Of Infants*. At the first Preaching of the Gospel, the main Body of Christians consisted of those, who had by the Apostles Preaching been converted from the Jewish or from the Gentile Religion, to the Christian; and these were consequently Baptized into the Name of Christ, after they were come to *riper Years*. Afterwards, when the Christian Religion had spread itself over whole Countries and Nations, the Church consisted chiefly of such as were born of Christian Parents, and educated from the Beginning in the Christian Religion; and these were generally, even in the Primitive Times, admitted into the Church by Baptism *in their Infancy*.

3. In the Baptism of *Persons of riper Years*, we must observe, 1. What was required of them *beforehand*, in order to prepare them for Baptism: 2. In what *manner* they were baptized; to what *Privileges* they were admitted; and to what *Duties* they were engaged, by their Baptism: And 3. What was required of them *after* their Baptism.

C H A P. II.

What was required of Persons to be Baptized in the Primitive Church, in order to fit them for Baptism.

1. **T**HE first Thing to be considered in the Baptism of Persons converted to Christianity, is, what was required of them *beforehand*, in order to fit them for this most solemn Admission into the Church of Christ. Now that which was indispensably necessary to prepare them for this Solemnity, and to qualify them to be Partakers of this Holy Sacrament, was *Faith* and *Repentance*, *i. e.* a Declaration of their *firm Belief* of the great Doctrines of the Christian Religion, and of their *Resolution to live suitably* to that Belief.

2. In the Apostles Times, when the Miracles wrought by those first Preachers of Christianity, were so convincing; and the extraordinary Grace of God, poured down upon Men, so effectual, as to convert them to the Faith of Christ as it were in an *instant*: A single Declaration of their Faith and Repentance, seems to have been accounted sufficient to prepare them to receive Baptism immediately. For thus we find St. *Philip* baptizing the Eunuch immediately upon his

professing his Belief that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, *Acts* viii. 38 ; and St. Paul baptizing the Goaler immediately upon his being converted by the Miracle of the Prison Doors opening with an Earthquake, *Acts* xvi. 33.

3. But afterwards, when these mighty Operations of the Spirit grew less common, and Men began to be convinced more gradually by the ordinary Means of the Preaching of the Word ; it was not thought sufficient in most Churches, for Men upon their Conversion to *Profess* their Faith and their Repentance ; but they were obliged to *give* some *Evidence* of the Sincerity of both, before they could be admitted into the Church by Baptism. If they had formerly been great Sinners, they were to evidence their Repentance by *Prayers*, and *Watchings*, and *Fastings*, and *Confessing their Sins*. They were to demonstrate by the real Change of their whole Course of Life, that they had actually renounced all the Rites and Practices of their former Profession, and would for the future conform their Lives to the Rules of the Christian Institution. They were to endeavour to purge their Conscience from every evil Work, that their Baptism might be,

1 Pet. iii. *not the putting away the filth of the Flesh, but the Answer of a good Conscience towards God.*
21.

4. They

4. They who were willing thus to make Proof of their Repentance, and of their sincere Desire to be admitted into the Church of God, were *Catechised* in all those necessary Articles of the Christian Faith, which they were to make publick Profession of at their Baptism : They were fully instructed in the excellent Moral Precepts of that Divine Religion, which they were to practice the remaining Part of their Lives: And then they were thought prepared for *the washing of Regeneration*, and *the renewing of the Holy Ghost*.

C H A P. III.

In what manner Persons converted to Christianity were baptized; to what Privileges they were admitted; and to what Duties they were engaged by their Baptism.

1. **W**HEN the Person to be baptized was thus prepared, and the Time appointed come; which was usually at *Easter* or *Whitfontide*, the Commemorations of our Saviour's *Passion* and *Resurrection*, and of the great *Effusion of the Holy Spirit*, things principally respected in this Sacrament; (tho' it might also upon Occasion be celebrated at
any

any other time;) When the Person, I say, was thus prepared, he was brought by the Priest to a convenient Place, where there was plenty of Water; and being stript of all his Cloaths, he *in the first Place*, in a most solemn manner renounced the Devil and all his Works, the *Pomps* and Vanities of this wicked World, and all, not only the absolutely *sinful*, but also the *lawful Desires of the Flesh*, so far as to keep them within the most strict Bounds, and most exact Obedience to the Laws of Reason and Religion. Then he made Profession of his Faith in one God, the Father Almighty, &c. in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, &c. and in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholick Church, &c. After which he was baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; being immersed in the Water three times, once at the Name of each Person in the ever blessed Trinity. Which being done, he came up out of the Water; and then (according to the Custom of some Churches) he was anointed with Oyl, with the Addition of some other Ceremonies, which as they were in their own Nature indifferent, so they were used only in some Places, and that diversly according to the different Usage of particular Churches. After all which, he was cloathed with a white Garment; and so admitted among the Faithful to the Communion of the Church. Which
last

last Ceremony the *Greeks* (as a Learned Writer of our own observes,) keep up to this Day; putting upon the Child immediately after Baptism a white Garment, with this Form, *Receive this white and immaculate Cloathing, and bring it with thee unspotted before the Tribunal of Christ, and thou shalt inherit eternal Life.*

2. This was the Form and Manner, in which Persons converted to Christianity were Baptized in the Primitive Church. And by all these *outward and visible Ceremonies*, were significantly represented certain *inward and invisible Things*: Which were either the *Privileges*, to the *injoyment* of which the Person Baptized was intitled: or the *Duties*, to the *Performance* of which he was engaged by his Baptism.

3. The first *Grace* or *Privilege*, which God annexed to the right Use of this Ordinance of Baptism, and to which the Person Baptized was consequently intitled, was *Remission of all past Sins*. The Design of our Saviour's coming into the World, was by the Merit of his Death and Suffering to purchase Pardon and Remission for all those, who should *believe* in his Name and *obey* his Gospel. *Rom. iii. 25. Whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness for the Remission of Sins that are past, through the Forbearance of God.* Now the Means by which
this

this Pardon is applied, and the Seal by which it is secured to all those who *Believe*, and by Repentance begin to *Obey* the Gospel, is *Baptism*. Whosoever therefore was converted to Christianity, and was baptized, *was baptized into the Death of Christ; i. e.* was by Baptism intitled to the Benefit of the Pardon purchased by his Death and Passion. As *his Body was washed with pure Water*, so his Sins were absolutely done away by the Blood of Christ, and his *Heart sprinkled from an evil Conscience*, Heb. x. 22. Hence Baptism is called the *Washing* of Regeneration, Tit. iii. 5. and they who by the Apostles Preaching, or by any other more extraordinary Means, were convinced of the Truth of the Gospel, were exhorted immediately to be baptized, and *wash away their Sins*, Acts xxii. 16. *And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy Sins, calling on the Name of the Lord; And Acts ii. 38. Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the Remission of Sins.* To which those Places also seem manifestly to allude, Rev. i. 5. *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our Sins in his own Blood; and Rev. vii. 14. These are they which have washed their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.* The plain Meaning of all which Passages is this; That as a new-born Infant is without Spot, Innocent and Sinless; so every one that

that is *born of Water*, i. e. regenerated by Baptism, is in the Account of God as if he had never sinned, cloathed with the white and spotless Garment of Innocence, which if he never defile by gross and wilful Sins, *he shall walk in white with Christ*, for *he shall be worthy*, Rev. iii. 4.

4. The next *Privilege* which Baptism principally and most significantly represented, was the *Admission* of the Convert into the *Church and Family of God*. All that received Baptism, were thereby actually admitted into the Society of Christians, and to the Participation of all the Benefits which God bestows upon his Church. They were admitted to the *Communion of the Saints* of God, and to the *Fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*, 1 Cor. i. 9. They were made *Fellow-Citizens with the Saints and of the Household of God*, Eph. ii. 19. being come unto *Mount Sion*, and unto the *City of the living God*, the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, and to an innumerable Company of *Angels*, to the general Assembly and Church of the *First-born* which are written in *Heaven*, and to God the Judge of all, and to the *Spirits of just Men made perfect*, and to *Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant*, &c. Heb. xii. 22. More particularly, they were made, First, *Members of Christ*; i. e. they were incorporated into that Body; whereof Christ is the Head. Secondly, they were made *Children of God*; i. e. they

they were enrolled in the Number of those, whom God had chosen to be his Peculiar and Elect People; and whom he designed to govern with the same Tenderneſs, as an affectionate and merciful Father does his moſt beloved Children: Which is what the Apoſtles expreſs by our being *called the Sons of God*, 1 Joh. iii. 1. by our having *received the Adoption of Sons*, Gal. iv. 5. and by our having *Power given us to become the Sons of God*, John i. 12. Laſtly, *They were made Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven*; i. e. They who before were *Aliens from the Commonwealth of Iſrael, and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no hope, and without God in the World*, did by Baptiſm enter into that Covenant, wherein God aſſured the Promise of eternal Life to all thoſe who ſhould believe and repent: And this is what the Apoſtle means by our having *our Citiſhip in Heaven*, Phil. iii. 20. and by our being *Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Chriſt, that we may be glorified together with him*, Rom. viii. 17.

5. Another *Privilege* which was repreſented and conferred by Baptiſm, was the *Influence and Aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit*. All Perſons that were baptized, as their Bodies were waſhed and purified with *Water*, ſo their Minds were ſanctified by the *Spirit of God*: *But ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified in the Name of our Lord Jeſus,*

Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. vi. 11. At their Baptism they received the Holy Ghost, as a Gift constantly annexed to that Ordinance; and unless they quenched and grieved it by their Sins committed afterwards, it always continued with them from thenceforward, assisting and enabling them to perform their Duty, strengthening and comforting them under Temptations and Afflictions, and *bearing Witness with their Spirit, that they were* Rom. viii. 16. *the Children of God.* At the first preaching of the Gospel, this Influence of the Holy Spirit frequently discovered it self, in those extraordinary Gifts of Speaking with Tongues, Working Miracles, &c. as appears in the History of the Acts of the Apostles. But these by degrees ceasing, it afterwards continued to evidence it self in the strange and almost miraculous Change, which it made in the Minds of Men, from the most corrupt and vicious, to the most virtuous and heavenly Disposition, almost in an instant upon their being baptized. And when this Effect also grew less frequent, as the Zeal and Purity of the Christians declined; it yet continued always by its secret Power to renew and transform Mens Minds, to instruct Men in their Duty, and to enable them to perform it. Hence Baptism is called the *Renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 5.* and a being *born of Water and of the Spirit,*

rit, John iii. 5. and by the Ancients frequently, *Illumination*. And Persons baptized are said to have been *enlightened*, to have *tasted of the heavenly Gift*, and to have been *made Partakers of the Holy Ghost*. Heb. vi. 4.

6. The last *Privilege* which Persons Baptized were intitled to by virtue of that Ordinance, was an *Assurance of a Resurrection to eternal Life*. They received, as hath been said, the Holy Spirit of God; and that Spirit, so long as it dwelt

* 2 Cor. i. with them, was a * *Seal* and † *Ear-*
22. Eph. i. *nest* of their future Resurrection :
13. & iv. 30. For if the Spirit of him that raised
† 2 Cor. i. up Jesus from the Dead dwell in
22. & v. 5. you, he that raised up Christ from
Eph. i. 14. the Dead shall also quicken your mortal Bodies, by his Spirit that dwel-

leth in you, Rom. viii. 11. And this was most significantly represented by their descending into the Water, and rising out of it again. For as Christ descended into the Earth, and was raised again from the Dead by the Glory of the Father; So Persons baptized were buried with him by Baptism into Death, Rom. vi. 4. and rose again after the Similitude of his Resurrection. They were *planted together in the Likeness of his Death*; and they were by this Sign assured, that they should be also in the *Likeness of his Resurrection*. Thus the Apostle St. Paul, Colos.

Colos. ii. 12 ; Ye are buried with him in Baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the Faith of the Operation of God, who hath raised him from the Dead. To which St. Peter seems likewise to allude, 1 Pet. iii. 21. *The like Figure whereunto (viz. to the saving of the Ark by the Water of the Flood) even Baptism doth also now save us, by the Resurrection of Christ.*

7. These are the Spiritual Graces or Privileges, which were represented by the Outward and Visible Signs in Baptism, and conferred by their Means : And These are what God on his Part engages and assures to us, in that Great and Holy Covenant. There are other Things, which the Persons Baptized obliged themselves to on their Part in that Covenant ; And these are the Duties which by their Baptism they vow and take upon themselves to perform, represented also by the same Outward and Visible Signs. The First of these Duties which the baptized Persons promised and obliged themselves to perform, was a *Constant Confession of the Faith of Christ and Profession of his Religion.* They were admitted by Baptism into the Church and Family of Christ ; and they were bound at all times to own themselves his Disciples. They were solemnly baptized into his Death, Rom. vi. 3. and they were obliged not to be ashamed of the Cross of Christ, and to confess the Faith of him crucified. They owned publicly at

their Baptism, their Belief in God, *the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord*; and they were bound at all times to make Profession of this Faith. They had *with the Heart believed unto Righteousness*, Rom. x. 10. and they thought, *that with the Mouth, Confession was necessary to be made unto Salvation*. They were assured, that if they *confessed Christ before Men*, he would also *confess them before his Father which is in Heaven, and before the Angels of God*, Luke xii. 8. but if they were *ashamed of him, and denied him before Men*, he would also be *ashamed of them when he came in the Glory of his Father with the Holy Angels*. And so powerful an Effect had this Consideration upon the Primitive Christians, that in the Times of Persecution, when they were tempted to deny their Saviour and renounce the Faith which they had once embraced, they chose rather to endure the most exquisite Torments that the Wit of Man could invent, than either to renounce or dissemble their Christianity; and those who out of Fear denied or were ashamed to confess their Faith, they looked upon to have forfeited and renounced their Baptism, as having *crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open Shame*, Heb. vi. 6.

8. The Second Thing to which baptized Persons solemnly obliged themselves by their Baptism, was *a Death unto Sin, and a New-*

Birth unto Righteousness; i. e. they engaged utterly and for ever to forsake all manner of Sin and Wickedness; all *Idolatrous and Superstitious Worship of false Gods*; all *Injustice, Wrong, Fraud and Uncharitableness towards Men*; all the *Pride and Vanity, the Pomp and Luxury of this present World*; all the *Lusts of the Flesh, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness, Gluttony, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like*. And for the future they promised to make it the Business of their Lives, to fulfil all Righteousness according to the strictest Rules of the Christian Doctrine and Discipline; to *Worship the only true God, with all Devotion, Reverence and Humility*; to be *exactly just in their Dealings with Men, and generously charitable upon all Occasions*; in fine, to be *Temperate and Sober, Chast and Pure, as the Worshipers of God and the Temples of the Holy Ghost*. This was indeed a *Dying unto Sin, and Living unto Righteousness*; This was properly being *Regenerated or Born again*; This was truly being *Washed, Sanctified and Justified, in the Name of Christ, and by the Spirit of God*. And indeed, this was the *principal Thing* which was signified in Baptism, and the *principal End* for which the whole Ordinance was designed: This was what the Person to be baptized was to *profess with his own Mouth, when he renounced the Devil and all his Works*; And this

this was what was principally represented by that main part of the Ceremony, *the descending into the Water, and rising out of it again.* For so the Apostle St. Paul most fully explains it, *Rom. vi. 3. Know ye not that so many of us, as were baptized unto Jesus Christ, were baptized into his Death? Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was raised up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of Life; Knowing this, that our old Man is crucified with him, that the Body of Sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve Sin.* That is; The Design of our descending into the Water to be baptized, and rising again out of it, was to mind us, that as we then received Remission of our past Sins by Virtue of Christ's having died for Sin; so we our selves were in like manner to die and be buried to Sin, and rise again to walk for the future with Christ in newness and holiness of Life. This therefore was the principal Thing respected in Baptism; and without this *Answer of a good Conscience towards God*, the washing or putting away the filth of the flesh, *1 Pet. iii. 21*, could nothing avail in the sight of God. Baptism is not the *Washing and Cleansing of the Body*, but the *Purifying of the Mind*, from every evil Work, to serve the living God; Without which, Baptism is so far from being available

available to the Remission of Sin, that on the contrary it makes it far the more grievous and inexcusable. But of this more in the next Chapter.

9. The Third and Last Thing, to which Men were solemnly engaged at their Baptism, was *Self-denial and Contempt of the World*. Our Saviour had told his Disciples, that *whosoever* would come after him, must deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow him, Luke xiv. 26. that *whosoever* was not willing to forsake all that he had, Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, and Brethren and Sisters, yea, and his own Life also, he could not be his Disciple. And therefore when any Man came to be baptized, he was accordingly obliged to renounce the World, and all its Glory, the Poms and Vanities, the Splendour and Pleasures of it : He professed himself a Candidate for the Glory that should be revealed hereafter ; and that therefore he would never be ambitious for that Honour, which Men so earnestly contend for here : He declared that he expected his Portion in those spiritual Joys, which Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into the Heart of Man to conceive them, 1 Cor. ii, 9 ; and therefore he would never set his Heart and Affections upon any gross and sensual Pleasure : He professed that from thenceforward his Treasure should be in Heaven,

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where

where neither Moth nor Rust doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through and steal, Matt. vi. 20; and that therefore he would never be covetous of *Riches*, or Possessions *on Earth*: In a word, he engaged to make it the main Business of his Life, to prepare and fit himself to be partaker of those Things, which God had, for them that love him, laid up *in the next World*; and that therefore he would never be extreemly solicitous after any Thing *in this*. This was what the Primitive Christians understood by their *Renouncing the World*. They thought themselves obliged not only to forsake all *gross and palpably sinful Lusts*, but also to be very sparing in their Enjoyments of what was *Lawful*. They looked upon this World and the *next*, as Enemies to each other; and that they were to fight as Soldiers under the Banner of Christ, *against the Pleasures and Temptations of this World, for the Glories of the other*. And for an Emblem of this it was, that in some Churches they anointed the baptized Person with Oil: He was compared to a *Combatant*, to a *Runner* just preparing to start in the Christian Race; And they minded him, that if those *who strive for the Mastery, only to obtain a corruptible Crown*, 1 Cor. ix. 25, are *temperate in all Things*; much more ought he to confirm and strengthen himself, to prepare and barden himself, to be ready and expedite, to be

be *temperate and abstemious*, and to get perfectly above all those earthly Desires, which would hinder and clog him in that great Race, which he was to run for the *Crown of Immortality*. 'Tis true, the forsaking all wordly Possessions for the Name of Christ, was a Condition more particularly required in those Primitive Times of Persecution: But how far it still obliges *us*, (as it most certainly does in *some* Sense) shall be considered in its proper Place.



CHAP. IV.

What was required of Persons after Baptism.

1. **W**HEN the whole Ceremony was finished, the Person baptized was cloathed (as has been already observed) with a white Garment; and then he was admitted to the Communion of the Faithful. And that which was afterward required of him, was this one great and necessary Thing; *To keep this Baptism Pure and Undeiled, the remaining part of his Life.*

2. To the keeping a Man's Baptism Pure and Undeiled, through the remaining Part of his Life, that which was thought absolutely necessary in the Primitive Church, was this: *First*, That he from that time forward

preserved himself from falling, not only into the *Habit*, but even so much as into the *single Act* of any of those gross and palpable Wickednesses; *Idolatry, Perjury, Blasphemy; Murder, Sedition, Theft, manifest Injustice, Cheating; Adultery, Fornication, Unclean-ness, Drunkenness, Revelling*, and such like; of which *St Paul* expressly and peremptorily declares, and repeats it with great earnestness over and over again, that *they who do such Things, shall have no Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God*. One that was born of God, might be surprized into an unheeded Sin; but into the gross Act of any of these *manifest and notorious* Impieties, they thought he was *never* to be seduced; and if he were, that he ceased to be the Servant of God. For *whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not*; and *whosoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin*; for *his Seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God*, 1 John iii. 6. From the Acts therefore of any of these *great and plain* Wickednesses, which stare Men in the Face, and at the first View terrifie Men's Consciences, they thought it *indispensably* necessary that a Man abstained *wholly*; and that *these* Things were not so much as to be *once named* among Christians, *Epb. v. 3*. But then *secondly*, To the keeping a Man's *Baptism pure and undefiled*, that which was thought further necessary was; *that*, from falling into an *habitual*

habitual practice of any of those *smaller and less scandalous* Sins, which Carelessness and culpable Ignorance would be very apt to betray a Man into *the Acts* of, he ought to endeavour to secure himself by great Cautiousness, and sincere Enquiry after the Knowledge of his Duty; *That*, from Sins of Omission, from growing cool in Religion, and remitting of his first Love, he ought to endeavour to preserve himself by constant Meditation, and hearty Prayer to God for the Assistance of his Holy Spirit; *That*, in order to grow in Grace, he ought to be always humble and teachable, penitent and devout, meek in Spirit, and pure in Mind; And that, to attain Perfection, he ought to be always *pressing forward towards the Mark of the Prize of the high calling*, Phil. iii. 14. with a perfect Contempt of the World, an entire Love of God, and a boundless Charity to all Mankind.

3. This was what the Primitive Christians understood by keeping their *Baptism pure and undefiled*; viz. A regular and constant practice of all Holiness and Virtue, from the Time of their Baptism to their Death. And to this they thought themselves most strongly obliged, by the very Form of their Baptism: They were *immersed* into the Water, and they rose out of it again, and this great Solemnity was never after to be repeated; in token that as Christ *once* died for Sin; and

rose again *never* to come under the Power of Death any more ; so they were this *once* to have their Sins perfectly wash'd away by his Blood, and were bound *never* to return under the Power of them any more. Thus St Paul himself most expressly and excellently argues, *Rom. vi. 9: Knowing that Christ being raised from the Dead, dieth no more ; Death hath no more Dominion over him ; For in that he died, he died unto Sin once ; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God : Likewise reckon ye also your selves to be dead indeed unto Sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord : Let not Sin therefore reign in your mortal Body, that you should obey it in the Lusts thereof.* The Force of which Argument is plainly this: When we descended into the Water, and arose out of it again, we made publick Profession, that as we hoped for Pardon of our past Sins through the Merits of the Death of Christ, so we our selves would thenceforth die unto Sin, that is, utterly cast it off and forsake it, and for the future rise again to walk with Christ in newness and holiness of Life. So that unless from the Time of our thus putting off Sin, we continue constantly to live in all Holiness and Righteousness, we have no just Reason to expect Remission by Virtue of the Death of Christ, into which we were baptized. For it being the express Condition of the Remission of Sin, that we continue

no longer in it, but live from thenceforth unto God; the Blood of Christ it self, which was shed to be a Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World, can avail nothing for one that continues in Sin, whom our Saviour himself has particularly excepted from the Benefit of the Pardon purchased by his Death and Passion.

4. Accordingly Persons after their Baptism were instructed, *That* they must now utterly and for ever renounce all the sinful Pleasures and Desires of the World. *They were told, that* they now received Remission of their *past* Sins, by Virtue of the Death of Christ; and therefore they must take great heed that they sinned *no more*. *They were told, that* they now washed their Garments in the Blood of the Lamb, *Rev. vii. 14,* (for a Signal whereof, they were accordingly cloathed in white,) and that they must take care to bring this unspotted Innocence with them, before the Tribunal of Christ; (To which Custom our Saviour himself seems to allude, *Rev. iii. 4.* Thou hast a few Names, even in *Sardis*, which have not defiled *their Garments*, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy :) *They were told, that* they were now baptized for the Remission of all their past Sins; and if they kept not this Baptism pure and undefiled, they could not be sure they should ever be able to obtain the like *full and per-*

fect Remission again: They were told, that they now started in that great Race, which they were to run for the Crown of Immortality; and if those who were found tardy in an Earthly Race, were beaten and disgraced, of how much forer Punishment should they be thought worthy, who negligently faultred in the Race of Immortality? They were told, that they now entred into that Covenant of God, the Seal whereof was, Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity, 2 Tim. ii. 19; and if they kept not this Seal, their Punishment would be among Apostates, whose Worm shall not die, and whose Fire shall not be quenched. They were told, that they had now escaped the Pollutions of the World, through the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. ii. 20; and if after this they should be again intangled therein, and be overcome, and turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them, their Punishment should be double to that of those, who had never known the Way of Righteousness. Finally, They were told, that they were now enlightned, and had tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and were sealed thereby unto the Day of Redemption; and if after this they should fall away, it would be exceeding difficult to renew them to Repentance, Heb. vi. 6. That they had now received the perfect Know-
ledge

ledge of the Truth; and if after this they sinned wilfully, there would remain no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation, which should devour the Adversary, Heb. x. 27. In a word, That they now received a certain Promise and Assurance of Eternal Life; but if they would sell this Blessing for the momentary Gratifications of Sense, they might perhaps afterwards be rejected when they should desire to inherit it, and find no place for Repentance, though they might seek it carefully with Tears, Heb. xii. 17.

5. These were the severe Cautions, with which the Primitive Church obliged baptized Persons upon their utmost Peril, to keep themselves stedfast from the Time of their Baptism in all holy and blameless Conversation. Those who *did* continue to walk suitably to this Profession, were said to be washed, to be sanctified, to be justified, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. vi. 11. And because in those purest times, there were hardly any among Christians, who did not walk suitably to their Profession; it being the same thing *then* to be a Christian, and to be a good Man; therefore those Terms, *Elect, Regenerate, Sanctified, born of God*, and the like, which we now appropriate only to the best and most Holy Men, are not in Scripture so appropriated, but applied promiscuously

cuously to all Christians; as appears from the Titles of the Apostles Letters, in which whole Churches in general are called *Elect*, *Sanctified*, and the like; and most evidently from St *John*, who in his first Epistle, Chap. v. Verse 1. *Whosoever*, saith he, *believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ*, i. e. every Christian; there being hardly any one in *those Times*, who was not indeed, what he professed and pretended to be, a *Regenerate*, *Sanctified* and *Elect* Person. And as Christians who then lived thus suitably to their Profession, were stiled *Regenerate*, *Sanctified*, and the like; so they who continued to live thus suitably *to the End*, were said to *Persevere*. And of such *only* was it said, that they *Persevered*; in opposition to those who after their Baptism lapsed into any notorious Transgression. For one that had *thus* lapsed, they did not think it sufficient that he should repeat his Crime no more, (which was the Condition of *Baptismal* Remission,) but he was obliged by a long course of *Mortification*, *Prayers*, *Tears* and *good Works*, to endeavour to wash out the Stain and Guilt. Nay, and even this Course also they allowed of but *Once*; not that true Repentance would at any time be in vain and unacceptable to God, but (as an ancient Writer expresses it,) that *That* which was the only remaining Remedy, might not
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by being made too easy, grow contemptible and ineffectual.

6. And now let *Us* think upon this ; let *Us* consider this, with Shame and Confusion of Faces ; who, I do not say after *Baptism* and the solemn taking upon our selves the Profession of Christianity, but after frequent *Purposes* and *Promises* of Reformation, after repeated *Vows* and *Resolutions* of Amendment, nay, perhaps after Confirming all these by the *Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ*, do yet continue in Sin, and defer our Repentance. The *Primitive Christians* thought themselves absolutely obliged to live in the constant Practice of all Holiness and Virtue, from the Time of their Baptism to their Death ; and can *We* hope to be accepted, if notwithstanding all our Pretences to Repentance and Reformation, we still continue, under the weak Excuses of Infirmary and Inadvertency, to live in any known Sin ? Doth *our* Baptismal Vow lay no Obligation upon us ? Or hath God established a Covenant with *us* upon slighter Terms, and entailed his Promises to *us* upon easier Conditions, than he did to the first and purest Christians ? Let no Man deceive you, saith St *John*, He that doth Righteousness, is Righteous, 1 John iii. 7. 'Tis true, the Case is not altogether the same with us, as it was with them. We live in Christian Nations, and under Christi-

an Governments, where there are no *Pagans* to be converted to Christianity, and to be baptized *after their Repentance*, and with *a full Conviction of Mind*: And of those who are born of Christian Parents, there are very few so happy, as not to be entangled in the Habit of any Sin, before they come to a perfect Understanding and compleat Conviction of all the Truths of Religion; And in this Case it *must* indeed be confessed, that it cannot but require *some Time*, perfectly to overcome a vitious Disposition, and to obtain the Habit of the contrary Virtue. But may we therefore spend our *whole Lives* in little and weak strugglings against Sin, without ever arriving at that pitch of Virtue, which was anciently thought necessary to prepare a Man for Baptism? May we therefore be excused from ever becoming *perfect* Christians, because we were brought up all along in the Christian Religion, and were never converted by any sudden Conviction? When a Man is in that State described by *St Paul* in the 7th Chapter to the *Romans*, that he is convinced of the Evil of great and known Sins, and sets his Mind to resist and strive against them, yet not so but that through the Viciousness of his Inclination or the Force of evil Habits he frequently relapses and is intangled in them again; 'tis a Sign indeed that such a one is not yet
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hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin; there is hopes that through the Grace of God he may *at length* prevail and overcome his Temptations; but he has not yet overcome, he has not yet attained to be a good Christian: nor can he be said to have done so, 'till he has brought himself into such a State, as that he be perfectly gotten *above* all the Temptations to known Sin, and assured by the Grace of God, that he shall not fall into it any more. To such a state as this, he must resolve to arrive; and he must resolve to arrive at it *timely*, that he may have a certain Title to the Reward of Obedience. There is hardly any Man so wicked, who does not design to repent at one time or other before he dies; and our Saviour *has* indeed in his Gospel made the same Promises to Repentance, that he has to Innocence and continued Obedience: But let no Man deceive himself by a fatal Error: The Repentance to which our Saviour has made such large Promises, is not the *late* Repentance of a *Christian*, but the *timely* Repentance of a *Jew* or a *Heathen* at his Conversion to Christianity; and is therefore the *very same*, and *no other* than *Baptism* it self. Indeed if a Christian by an unhappy Education be brought up in Sin, and habituated to Wickedness; when-ever he comes by the Power of God's Word and
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the Influence of his Holy Spirit, to be convinced of the Evil of his Ways, and of the Necessity of Religion, he is then in the same State that a Heathen Convert is supposed to be at his Baptism, and the same Promises are made to them both: But when a Christian, who has a clear Knowledge of his Duty, does notwithstanding *that*, continue wilfully all his Life in Sin; our Saviour is so far from assuring him that God and Angels will rejoyce at his Conversion, if when he grows old he leaves off sinning, because he can sin no more; that he has nowhere promised that such a Repentance shall be accepted *at all*. We must therefore *so* break off our Sins by Repentance, as to attain the Habits of the contrary Virtues, and to *live* in them. Such a Repentance as this, our Saviour will accept; and he that after such a Repentance lives constantly Virtuous, shall certainly be esteemed in the sight of God, as if he had always been innocent: But without the Evidence of such Life of Virtue and renewed Obedience, *how* far soever the Mercy of God may possibly extend it self, *We* can never have *any Assurance* that our Repentance will be accepted.

C H A P.

C H A P. V.

Of the Baptism of Infants.

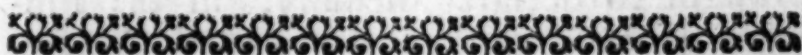
1. **A**S those who by the Preaching of the Apostles and their Successors, had been converted from *Judaism* or *Gentilism* to Christianity, were baptized at *riper Years*, upon their publicly professing their *Faith* and their *Repentance*; so those who were born of Christian Parents, and designed to be educated in the Christian Religion, have by the general Practice of the Christian Church been baptized in *their Infancy*, upon Promise made by *Sureties*, that they should be instructed in the *Faith* and in the *Obedience* of the Gospel.

2. And that Infants are *rightly* so admitted to this Ordinance, (besides the almost general Consent and Practice of the Christian Church,) I shall use but this *One Argument* to demonstrate. Those who are fit to be admitted into the Kingdom of Christ in *Heaven*, (as our Saviour himself pronounces Infants to be, *Mar. x. 14, 15.*) are certainly qualified to be received as Members of his Church on *Earth*. The Qualifications which fit Men for both, are *Repentance* and *Faith*: Now though Infants have not *Repentance*, yet they have *Innocence*,

cence, which is better than Repentance, and which makes them that they need it not. For if those who have been the most enormous Sinners, are yet by their Repentance qualified for Baptism; how much more are Infants, who have never actually sinned, fitted for it by their *Innocence*? And though Infants have not, and cannot have actual *Faith*, yet they are *Sanctified* by being born of *Believing* Parents, they are already in *some Sense* within the Limits of the Church and of the Covenant of Promise, and are ready without Prejudice to be instructed in the *Truth* of the Gospel, and in the *Obedience* thereof.

3. Infants therefore are rightly admitted to *Baptism*, and thereby to the *Privileges* appropriated by Christ to the Members of his Church. But because Baptism is a Covenant, wherein there is as well a Promise made on the Part of the Person baptized, of *certain Duties to be performed*, as one on God's Part, of *certain Graces and Privileges to be conferred*; and because Infants are not capable of making any *Promise* immediately by themselves; it has therefore been the Wisdom of the Church to appoint certain *Sureties*, who should promise in the Name of the Child, what it *self* should afterwards be obliged to perform, *i. e.* who should undertake to see it instructed in the Nature and Obligation of those

those Duties, which, upon Account of its being a Member of the Church of Christ, it would at Years of Discretion be bound to perform.



C H A P. VI.

Of the Duty of God-Fathers and God-Mothers.

1. **T**H A T therefore which the Sureties undertake for a Child at its Baptism, is briefly this: *That it shall be taught all the Articles of the Christian Faith, with the Reasonableness of their Belief; that it shall be instructed in all the Duties of the Christian Life, with the Necessity of their Practice; and that it shall be minded in convenient Time to make publick Declaration of its being hearty in this Belief, and to enter into a renewed Engagement to continue constant in this Practice.* They promise *that it shall be taught to Believe in one God, the Father Almighty, &c. and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, &c. and in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholick Church, &c.* They promise *that it shall be instructed, to renounce the Devil and all his Works, the*
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Pomps and Vanities of this wicked World, and all the sinful Lusts of the Flesh, i. e. that it shall be taught to live Soberly, Righteously and Godly, in this present World. And they promise, that it shall in fit Season be brought to declare solemnly, in the Presence of God and of the whole Congregation, its firmness in the Faith of these Articles of Religion, and its Resolution to continue in the Obedience of these Commands.

2. This is what the God-Fathers or God-Mothers promise for a Child at its Baptism; This they promise solemnly in *the Presence of God, and in the Face of the Congregation.* And is it a light Thing, to enter into such a Promise solemnly *before God and his Church?* I doubt not but whosoever considers the Matter seriously, will hardly find *any Duty of greater Importance, or any Promise of more solemn Obligation?* yet is there no *Duty* more generally and more shamefully neglected, nor any *Promise* more lightly regarded.

3. 'Tis true, the Education of a Child is not wholly committed to the Care of those who are its *Sureties* in Baptism, but first and principally to the *Parents* themselves. But undoubtedly *they* are bound to be *Assistants*; and if the *Parents* either through Wickedness neglect to instruct it, or by Death are taken away from it, the
Sureties

Sureties must look upon this Care as chiefly devolved upon *Them*, and of which they must give a strict Account.

4. Tis not therefore a slight and trivial Matter, to be *Sureties* for Children in Baptism; 'tis not enough barely to make Profession of our Faith in their Name at the *Font*; but we are bound *afterward* to perform conscientiously, what we *there* solemnly promised for them before God and his Church, as a Duty wherein *their Souls* and *our own*, and the *welfare of the Church of Christ*, are highly concerned. *Tertullian* thought it a great Objection against the Use of Infant-Baptism, that the *Sureties* were there obliged to promise, what they were not sure they should live to perform; and what, if they did live, they could not be sure they should be able to perswade the baptized Person to take upon himself. He never once thought that so great a Trust might be *wilfully* betrayed, or so solemn a Promise *carelessly* neglected; which would have been a much stronger Objection. What would he have said, if he had lived in these Times, wherein nothing is more common, than for Men to take upon themselves this great Charge, without ever designing to think more of it?

5. I doubt

5. I doubt not but the notorious Neglect of this important Duty, is one great Cause of the shameless Wickedness of our present Age. For while *Parents* and *Sureties* are careless to instruct Children in the Nature and Obligation of their Baptismal Vow, vicious Inclinations prevail upon them and insensibly grow into vicious Habits, before they come to a perfect Knowledge of the *Necessity* and *Excellency* of Religion, of the *Extent* and *Obligation* of their *Duty*, and of the *Greatness* and *Certainty* of the *Happiness* annexed to it. Whereas were *Sureties*, according to their solemn Promise made to God and his Church, conscientiously careful to see that those for whom they have *Undertaken*, be timely and diligently instructed; Religion would have the first Possession of innocent and unprejudiced Minds; Children would, for the most part, though differently according to their different Tempers, be early wrought upon to admire the *Beauty* and the *Pleasure* of Virtue; to thirst after the *Love* of God and the *Happiness* of Heaven; and would be brought to *Confirmation*, with a deep *Sense* and *Conviction* of their Duty, with an earnest *Desire* of professing the *Reality* of their Faith and renewing their Promises of

of Obedience, and with a full Resolution of living suitably to that *Profession* and those renewed *Promises*, the remaining part of their Lives.



ESSAY



ESSAY the Second.

OF CONFIRMATION.

CHAP. I.

Of the Nature, Design and Use of Confirmation.



I. **T**HAT there is a certain Period of Time, at which every Man that is truly Religious, began to be so, and from which the Beginning of his Religious Life might truly be dated, is evident: But of what use the *Knowing* and *Fixing* this Period in a Man's own Mind, may be, is generally very little considered. For whilst some have groundlessly asserted, that there is a certain Time of every good Man's Conversion, after which it is impossible for him to fall away into a State

State of Wickedness; and whilst others have weakly imagined, that there is a certain Time of Conversion, after which, though a Man does fall into great Wickednesses, yet he cannot fall finally from a State of Grace; most others have thought that there is little or no use of enquiring *at all* into the exact time when the Religious Life begins; or if there were, that it is hardly possible for a Man to Fix and Determine it, since Men generally become Religious, not by a *sudden Conversion*, but by a *gradual Progress*. But though it be indeed true, that Men generally become Religious, not at once, but by degrees; yet may a Man nevertheless certainly fix to himself the Period, from whence to date the Beginning of his *Religious Life*. For if his Progress has been only from a more *imperfect State of Virtue*, (which consists in a constant sincere Endeavour to obey all the Commandments of God, but accompanied with many Frailties, Inadvertencies and Surprizes,) to a *more perfect and uniform Practice of Holiness*; he has been all along in the Course of a Religious Life. But if his Progress has been from a *Course of known and wilful Sin*, to a *Victory or Conquest* over his Lusts and Temptations; he must reckon his Religious Life from no longer a Time, (notwithstanding any pious Intervals and Strugglings which he may have had with his Habitual Temptations,)

tations,) than from that Period since which he has never fallen into any *known* and *gross* Sin. And the *Uses* of a Man's fixing within himself such a Period, would be *that more assured and settled Peace of Conscience*, which would arise from the distinct and clear View of a well-examined course of past Holiness; *that effectual Bar against falling into the Act of any known Sin*, which would arise from a Man's considering, that by such an Act he must lose all the Comfort of his past Virtue, and be forced to begin his Religious Life again from a new Period: And above all, *that great dread of going on in a Circle of Sinning and Repenting, Repenting and Sinning*; into which Men would be roused, by being brought to understand clearly, that such a Course is no part of a Religious Life *at all*.

2. Now this Period, from which I suppose a Christian to begin his Religious Life, must be either *Baptism, Confirmation* or *Repentance*. In those who are converted from the Profession of any other Religion to that of Christianity, the Period from whence *their* Religious Life ought to begin, is *Baptism*. And the Principal Cause of that strict Piety, for which the Primitive Christians are so deservedly Eminent, seems to be that great Rigour with which they insisted upon Mens living in a constant course of Piety from the Time of their entring into this solemn Covenant. In those who have been E-

ducated

educated from their Infancy in the Christian Religion, the Period from whence *their* Religious Life ought to be dated, is *Confirmation*; the Time from their Baptism being only their *Preparation*, or *time of Instruction*. But then for those who have neglected this great and solemn Opportunity, or have since fallen into any great and wilful Sins; the only remaining Time from whence their Religious Life can be reckoned, is *Repentance*, i. e. the Time since which they have so perfectly had the Conquest over all their Temptations, as not to have been seduced by them any more, into any *gross* or *wilful* Sin. Of *Baptism* I have already spoken in the *former* Essay; of *Confirmation* I shall treat in this; of *Repentance* in the *next*.

3. In the Primitive Church, those who upon Profession of their Faith and Repentance were by *Baptism* admitted into the Church of Christ, had this their Admission *completed* or *perfected* afterwards, by the *Imposition of Hands*. When the Samaritans had received the Word of God, and many of them were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus, only the Holy Ghost was as yet fallen upon none of them; we find that two of the Apostles were sent to lay their Hands on them, and then they received the Holy Ghost, Acts ~~viii~~, 17. This was the constant Practice of the Apostles, to confirm Men after *Baptism*, by the *Imposition of Hands*. Which

two Things are therefore laid down *together* among the Principles or Foundations of the Doctrine of Christ, *Heb. vi, 2* ; and were accordingly practised *jointly* by the Church in succeeding Ages. This *Custom* (saith St. Cyprian) is also descended to us, that they who are baptized be brought by the Rulers of the Church, and by our Prayer and the Imposition of Hands, may obtain the Holy Ghost, and be consummated with the Seal of the Lord. And Tertullian: After Baptism the Hand is imposed, by Blessing calling down and inviting the Holy Spirit: Then that most Holy Spirit willingly descends from the Father, upon the Bodies that are cleansed and blessed.

4. But of this Confirmation of Persons baptized at riper Years, which was anciently administered immediately after Baptism ; and is therefore by many, not without Reason, looked upon as a Part of the Ceremony of Baptism it self ; it is not my purpose to speak now more largely. That which I am at this time more especially to consider, is That Confirmation, as it is now in use in the Church, whereby those who have been baptized in their Infancy, are at Years of Discretion perfected or made compleat Members of the Church. And the Design and Use of Confirming such Persons, is plainly this. Baptism being a Covenant wherein there are as well certain Conditions promised to be performed on the Part of the Person Baptized,

Baptized, as certain Privileges assured to be conferred on God's part ; and Infants though they be capable of being admitted to the Privileges of Members of the Church, yet not being capable of promising and performing any Conditions, any otherwise than by Means of certain *Sureties*, who ingage to instruct them in the Nature and Obligation of the Promises made in their Name at their Baptism ; 'tis manifest that these baptized Infants, when they come to Years of Discretion, if they desire to continue to be Partakers of the Privileges which God has appropriated to the Members of his Church, they must be willing also to perform the *Conditions* which God has indispensably required of all those Members. That they may enter therefore into these Obligations, with the Advantage of greater *Solemnity* and *Choice* ; it has most wisely been instituted, that as soon as they be of Age to understand the Nature and the Obligation of that Promise which was made in their Name at their Baptism, they should be brought to make a publick Declaration in the Presence of God and his Church, of their taking freely *upon themselves* that Vow, and of their Resolution to live from thenceforward conformably to the *Conditions* of that great and solemn Covenant ; and that, upon this publick Profession of their Faith, and most solemn Purposes of Obedience, they should by Im-

position of Hands have the great Privileges of Baptism sealed anew and secured to them.

5. And that this might be done the more solemnly and effectually, so as to have a lasting Effect upon the Minds and Lives of Men, as the solemn Administration of *Baptism* had anciently among the Primitive Christians; *it were very much to be wished*, that as in those Primitive Times Persons converted to Christianity were not before Baptism admitted as compleat Members to the Communion of the Church, but were esteemed only as Candidates desirous to be instructed in the Christian Religion; so those who have now been only baptized in their Infancy, should before Confirmation be looked upon by others, and by themselves too, as no other than *Catechumens*. *It were to be wished*, that no one might be admitted to the *Communion*, before he were confirmed; and that no one might be admitted to *Confirmation*, before he had attained a perfect Knowledge of the Extent and Obligation of all the Duties of Religion, and given sufficient Evidence of his Resolution to live suitably to that Knowledge. *It were to be wished*, that as in the Primitive Church there were certain solemn Times appointed for Baptism, as *Easter* and *Whitsuntide*, at which those who were before prepared by a regular Course of Catechizing, were admitted with great Solemnity into the compleat

compleat Communion of the Church; so there were now such solemn Seasons appointed, against which Ministers of particular Parishes should for some time before-hand diligently instruct and prepare those, who were of Age to be presented to the Bishop to be confirmed. And above all, *it were to be wished*, that the whole Process might be performed with so much *Reverence* and *Solemnity*, that all the Persons confirmed might understand and be convinced, that they came now to have all the *Privileges*, which God hath promised to the Members of his Church, *sealed* and *assured* to them; that they now received the *Assistance* of the *Holy Spirit*, to enable them effectually to perform their Duty: and that they now solemnly undertook *for themselves* before God and the Church, what their *Sureties* promised for them before at Baptism, to Live from henceforward in all *Holiness* and *Purity*, and in constant *Obedience* to all the Commands of God, the remaining part of their Lives.

6. Were this excellent *Institution* thus solemnly and religiously observed, exceeding Great would be the Effects which we might justly hope to see produced by the Use of it. The Effect that the *Imposition* of the Apostles *Hands* had upon the first Converts to Christianity, was no less than the induing them with those extraordinary Gifts of *Speaking with Tongues*, *Working of Miracles*,

Miracles, and the like. And though these mighty Operations of the Spirit did afterward by degrees cease ; yet the constant *Influence of the Holy Ghost*, and the *Blessing of God* conferred by the Imposition of Hands, did in all succeeding Ages express and shew forth it self in great and very remarkable Effects : It filled Men with Spiritual and Internal Strength ; it indued them with *Courage* and *Wisdom* and *Fortitude*, to *confess boldly* the Faith of Christ crucified, and to promote zealously the Service of his Church ; it wrought in their Minds an ardent Love of God, and a continual Joy in the Holy Ghost ; a perfect Purity of Heart, and Contempt of all Worldly Enjoyments ; a boundless *Charity* towards all Mankind, and an infinite *Desire of doing Good* in their Generation. And were young Persons taught *Now* to receive Confirmation with the same *Preparation*, with the same *Reverence*, and with the same *Expectations*, that they did in the Primitive Times : we might yet expect, that God would annex the same *inward Blessings* to the Use of the same *external Means*. Were none esteemed *perfect Christians*, or looked upon as *complete Members* of the Church, before Confirmation ; Parents and Sureties would be obliged to *instruct* and *prepare* Children in order to be Confirmed ; and we should not see the Generality

nerality of Men esteeming themselves *perfect Christians* and *Faithful Members* of the Church, without ever knowing *how*, or upon *what Conditions* they were admitted into it. Were none admitted to Confirmation, who had not first passed through such a regular Course of Catechising, as to understand perfectly the *Extent* of their Duty, and their *Obligation* to perform it; this would breed in young Persons a great *Reverence* and *Esteem* for Religion, and a great *Zeal* in preparing themselves, that they might be thought worthy to be admitted to the compleat *Communion* of the Church, and to the *Participation* of its higher Mysteries. By this means Children would be fully and distinctly instructed in the Nature and Design of Religion, as soon as they came to the Knowledge of Good and Evil; and we should not see Men live all their Lives in the *Communion* of the Church, and in the *Participation* of its *Sacraments*, without ever understanding the very *first Principles* of the Doctrine of Christ, or what it was that they promised at Baptism. By this means that *gross Ignorance*, in which so many thousand Christians live and die, would in great measure be prevented; and we should not see Children for want of Instruction, so soon possessed and corrupted by *Vice*, as to *Lye* and *Swear*, to be *Disobedient* and *Ill-natured*, to be *Vain* and *Idle* in that tender

Age, wherein they might as easily be formed to all the contrary *Virtues* with the same Advantage of *Prejudice* and *first Possession*. Were none received to Confirmation, who did not express a sincere Resolution to live from thenceforward according to the *Purity* and the *Equity* of the Gospel in all Holiness and Godly Conversation; or who did not with *free Choice* and a *zealous Disposition* of Mind desire to take upon themselves their *Baptismal Vow*, and to make publick Profession of their *Faith* and *Obedience* in the presence of God and his whole Church; this would give a great *Reputation* to Religion and Virtue; this would prevent that *Coldness* and *Deadness* in Religion, which proceeds from Mens taking up the Profession of it in Course, without due Preparation and Disposition of Mind; this would make Men earnest and serious in the Profession of Christianity, and solicitous not to contradict their Profession by their Lives. Such a *solemn Renunciation* of the World, the Flesh and the Devil; such a *Vow* solemnly *confirmed* and *ratified* by our Personal Protestation in the Presence of God, and in the Sight of the Congregation, could not but be an effectual Bridle to restrain Men from Sin, and a powerful Spur to provoke Men to Good Works. The Fear of God and the Shame of Men, in whose Presence so sacred an Obligation

ligation was entred into, could not but be of great Force to bind Men to live worthy of this great *Vocation*, that they might answer the Expectation of God and his Church, and not become a Blemish and Dishonour to their Religion. Lastly, Were none admitted to Confirmation, without being first fully perswaded, that they came now to receive the Assistance of the *Holy Ghost*, which should from henceforward continue with them, to enable them to perform all the *Commands of God*, and to resist and overcome all the *Temptations* of the Enemy ; we might have Reason to hope, that as in the *Primitive Times*, so Now also, these *External Ordinances* would be accompanied with such plentiful Effusions of inward and sanctifying Grace, as would have a visible Effect in the Lives and Manners of Men. The Time was, when the Professors of True Religion could challenge the Unbelieving World to give them a Lustful, Malicious, Passionate, Revengeful Man, and they would by the Administration of Baptism and Confirmation, transform him into the Purest, the meekest, and the Gentlest Spirit upon Earth ; And since God has promised to be always with the Church by his Spirit even unto the End of the World, I see no Reason why Confirmation of Baptized Persons, if it were celebrated by us with the same Preparation

and Reverence as it was among the Ancients, might not be as effectual *Now* to *Confirm Men in Vertue*, as it was *Then* to *Transform them from Vice*; and have as proportionably great an Effect upon the following part of *our* Lives, as it had upon *theirs*. By *these Means* the Church would be again restored to its Ancient Regular Constitution. By *these Means* many perplexing Scruples about the worthy receiving the Holy Communion, would in great measure be removed; no one being capable of being admitted to that Holy Sacrament, without having been first Confirmed; and no one being capable of being Confirmed, without having first passed through such Preparation, as would fit him for the Communion. Lastly, By *these Means*, if any one after Confirmation lapsed into the Practice of any great and notorious Sin, a fair Opportunity would offer it self of restoring some Degree of that Ancient Discipline, the want of which is so justly lamented by the Church; this solemn Preparation, by which I suppose Persons fitted for Confirmation, being the most likely Thing in the World to work in Men's Minds such a Dread of Sins to be committed afterwards, as would dispose them to submit to, and to profit under Discipline.

7. These are the exceeding great Benefits, which would arise from such a solemn

solemn and Religious Use of Confirmation. But till this excellent Institution can be restored to its Ancient Solemnity and Reverence; which as it is much to be *wished*, so in the present degeneracy and corruption of Manners it is hardly to be *hoped*; all that can be done is, earnestly to exhort those who are in any capacity intrusted with the Instruction of Children, that they be careful for the *Honour of God*, and for the *Welfare of his Church*, to teach them to *Love God and Religion* with their first Love; to improve in them those Natural Principles of *Justice and Truth, Honesty and Thankfulness, Simplicity and Obedience*, which God hath planted in their very Creation; to teach them to resist the *Prejudices* and *first Insinuations* of Vice, and to be afraid of a *Sin* as of *Death*; to fill their Minds with great and honourable Thoughts of the *Privileges* of being made *Members of Christ, Children of God, and Heirs of Heaven*; to instruct them fully in the *Extent and Obligation* of all the *Duties* of the Christian Life, which in their Baptism they engaged to perform; and, when they be thus qualified, to bring them with *Understanding and Resolution*, with *Desire and Zeal*, to receive at Confirmation the *Consummation of Baptismal Grace*, and a joyful *Assurance of Glory and Immortality*, if they shall persevere in their Faith and their Obedience to the End.

8. My Design in the following Essay, is not to enter into any *Question of Dispute*, but only to lay down some *brief and practical Directions*, by which one that *designs to be Confirmed*, (whom I always suppose of Age to understand the whole Doctrine of Religion,) or one that is already *Confirmed*, and is sincerely desirous to lead a Religious Life, may attain to that *Primitive Holiness* and that *Perfection of Vertue*, which becomes the *Truth and Purity* of the Gospel.



CHAP. II.

What is to be done before Confirmation. Of Faith; of the Necessity of Religion; of the Necessity of Revelation; of the Evidence of the Christian Religion; and of Consideration.

1. **FIRST** then, in order to receive Confirmation, or to begin the Great Work of Religion, with due Preparation of Mind; Endeavour before all Things to attain a real and firm Belief of the great Doctrines of the Christian Religion. This is the only Foundation, that will be able to support the Design of a truly Religious Life. If we do

do really and firmly believe, the *Being* and the *Providence* of God ; if we be indeed convinced that the *Christian Religion* is a *Revelation* of the Divine Will ; if we be in earnest perswaded, that there will certainly come a *Day of Retribution*, wherein every Man shall receive according to that he has done, whether it be Good or Evil ; this is a *Faith*, which *will assuredly overcome the World* ; this is a *Belief*, which will certainly baffle all the Temptations of Sin and Satan ; this will make all the *Glories* of the World seem *mean*, and all the *Pleasures* of Sense *insipid* ; in a Word, this will inspire Men with such a vigorous Zeal, as will make them not only with *Ease* and *Contentment*, but with great *Pleasure*, sacrifice all Earthly Enjoyments to the doing the *greatest Good* here, and obtaining the *greatest Happiness* hereafter. But if we enter upon the Profession of Religion rashly and inconsiderately, more for *Form and Custom* than upon any mature *Deliberation and Conviction of Mind*, it is not possible that we should persevere in well-doing with Resolution and Patience : The Cares of the World and the Deceitfulness of Riches, the Sollicitations of Pleasure and the Lusts of other Things, will certainly prevail over us, and seduce us into Sin. Nothing but a *firm Faith*, grounded upon an impartial View and a deep Consideration of Things, can

can possibly carry a Man thro' the *Difficulties* and *Discouragements* of a Religious Life. But he that begins to build upon this Foundation, and lays down his first Principles of *Faith* immoveable as a Rock, will be able to surmount all Difficulties with *Bravery* and *Constancy*, and will attain the End of his Hopes with *Triumph* and *Joy*.

2. The true Reason why so great a Number of those who make Profession of Christianity, are either wicked and licentious, or at least cold and indifferent in Matters of Religion, is plainly this, That they do not *in earnest* believe, as they pretend and profess to do, the great Articles of Religion. They *in course* profess themselves to be Christians, without having ever considered what Christianity is; and *therefore* it has little or no Influence upon their Lives and Actions. For did Men indeed as firmly believe the Doctrines of the Christian Religion, as the Character they are willing to bear in the World obliges them to pretend they do, it would be in a manner as strange to find a Man whose *Actions* should give his *Words* the Lie, and his *Life* be unsuitable to his *Profession*, as to hear one disputing whether there were a Hell or no, while he were actually tormented in the Flames thereof. For though *Faith* has not the Evidence of *Sense*, as indeed it is impossible it should; yet if it

be well grounded, it could not but have in good measure the same Effect upon the Lives of Men, as the Evidence of Sense would have. When a *Temporal Prince* declares, that whoever be found guilty of such or such Crimes, shall undergo certainly this or that particular Punishment; such a Declaration has generally the same Influence upon all the Subjects concerned, as if they saw the Punishment already actually inflicted upon the Criminals. When therefore the supreme Governour of the World declares to Mankind his Will, which is their Law and Rule of Life; and inforces the Obligation of that Law by such Threats and Promises, as the Scripture, which is that Declaration of his Will, contains: If these Threats and Promises of the *Almighty* have not the same Influence upon the Hearts and Lives of Men, as those of an *Earthly Prince* in other Cases generally have; is it not evident either that Men do not in earnest believe that these Threats and Promises are indeed the Declaration of his Will, or else that they imagine, that though he now so earnestly presses, and seems so severely to exact Obedience to his Laws, yet at last he will not punish the Contempt of them? If this be not the Case, how comes the Christian Religion to have lost that Efficacy in reforming the Lives and Manners of Men, for which it was once so eminent
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even amongst its Enemies themselves? If we do indeed believe the same Gospel, and live under the Power of the same Religion, that the *Primitive Christians* did; how comes that Religion not to have the same Influence upon *our* Lives and Actions, that it had upon *theirs*? Can we hear Men daily prophane the Sacred Name of God with impious and horrid Oaths; and yet think they believe there is a God jealous of his Honour, and that will avenge himself on such a Nation as this? Can we see Men cheat and cozen, destroy and prey upon one another, without the least scruple or appearance of Remorse; and yet think they believe the *Truth* of the Christian Religion, and the *Severity* thereof? In a word, can we see Men dally with Eternity, and for the sake of a few *empty and momentary Gratifications*, hazard their Everlasting Welfare? Can we think it possible, I say, that rational Creatures should act with so prodigious a Carelessness, who yet believe not that the Scene of this World should be shut up in Everlasting Oblivion, but that there will come a Day wherein they must give Account for their Works, and be accordingly happy or miserable for ever? No certainly: Whatever Pretences Men may make to deceive others, and perhaps in some measure *themselves* too; there must lurk some secret Seeds of Infidelity in the Heart of every wicked

wicked Man ; and the true Reason why *this World* has so much the Ascendant over the Lives of Christians, must be their not having a firm Belief of the Glories of the *other*. Whoever therefore will *so enter* into a Religious Course of Life, as to be able to persevere in well-doing to the End ; whoever will *so lay the Foundation*, as to be able to *finish* ; must before all Things attain a firm and settled *Belief* of the great Truths of Religion. And as, *without this Ground-work*, it is not possible he should ever be resolute enough, to *overcome* the Enemies of his Religion and Happiness ; so, *with it*, it is not possible He should ever be *overcome* by them. He that has a firm and steady Belief of the Greatness and Excellency of those Riches, which *neither Moth nor Rust doth corrupt*, and to which *Thieves cannot break through to steal*, will never be so dazzled with the glittering of Gold, as to let it steal away his Heart and Affections. He that has a great and noble Idea of the *Glory which shall be revealed hereafter*, will never be inticed to squander away those Talents which God has given him, only in appearing splendid and great *here*. He that hath a strong and vigorous Expectation of those Pleasures which God hath prepared for them that love him, *which Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have they entered into the Heart of Man to conceive*, 1 Cor. ii, 9 ;

ii, 9 ; will never be perswaded to give himself up to the Voluptuousness and Sensuality of a Beast. In a Word, he that is *full of Faith*, and can look with Assurance beyond *Things Temporal* to those which are *Eternal*, has left no room in himself where the Devil can enter with his Suggestions, but is fortified on all Sides against all Temptations.

3. Now to attain such a *Faith* as this, not slight and superficial, but *firm* and *well-grounded*, and *immoveable* against all Assaults ; a Man ought to proceed by these Steps. First, he must by serious Consideration work in his own Mind a full and perfect Conviction of the *Being of God*, and of the *Excellency of his Attributes*. From thence he must collect the *Certainty of God's Providence over Men*, and the *Obligation of Mens Duty towards God*. From hence will follow the *Necessity of Religion here*, and the *Certainty of the Reward of Virtue hereafter*. After this, he must consider the *Necessity of a Divine Revelation to establish true Religion*, and the *Proofs which evidence the Christian Institution to be such a Revelation*. And above all, he must *fix these Things strongly*, and *imprint them on his Mind*, by *deep and constant Meditations*.

4. He that cometh to God, must in the first place believe that he *Is*, i. e. he must not only by a *slight* and *careless Assent* go along

along *inconsiderately* with the common Opinion, but he must form in his Mind a *considerate* and *rational*, a *strong* and *vigorous Perswasion* of the Being of God. Take a View of this great and glorious Fabrick of the World ; consider the *stupendous Magnitude* and the *exquisite Order* of its Parts ; consider the numberless Instances of *Infinite Power* and *unfathomable Wisdom*, which appear in this our Spot of Earth ; consider the *exquisite Artifice* which discovers it self in the Structure of the *Body* of Man, and the *inconceivable Subtilty* of the Operations of his *Mind*. Consider at the same time how *frail*, and *depending*, and *corruptible* all these Things are ; how *weak* and *unable* even Man, the noblest Part of the visible World, is, to be the Cause, or so much as the Preserver either of himself or any thing else, And this will raise in the Mind such a powerful Conviction of the Being of God, as will be a lasting and immoveable Foundation, on which to build a rational and considerate Design of Religion.

5. To one that is thus perswaded of the Being of God, it will be easie to conclude ; that, as that Supreme Being, from whom all other Things received their *Original*, must himself be *Eternal* ; as he, from whom all the *Powers* of all Things that exist, are derived, must himself be *All-Powerful* ; and as he, by whose Establishment all Things
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in all Places were made to move in such a *wise* and *wonderful* Order, as far exceeds the Capacity of the wisest of Men to comprehend ; must himself be *All-knowing* and *All-wise* ; So it cannot be, but that he who is *All-knowing*, *All-powerful* and *All-wise* ; who *sees* through all Things at one View, and can *effect* all Things with the same Ease that he can *will* them ; must *govern*, *direct* and *manage* all Things by an *Over-ruling Providence*. And because his *Power* is so great as not possibly to be *compelled*, and his *Wisdom* so perfect as not possibly to be *seduced*, to do any Thing contrary to those Eternal Rules, which the immutable *Law of the Divine Nature* and the unalterable *Constitution and Relation of Things* has fixed ; that Therefore this his Government of the World must be *Just* and *Equitable*, according to the nicest and exactest Measures of Infinite *Goodness*, *Righteousness* and *Truth*.

6. From this Notion of the *Being*, of the *Attributes*, and of the *Providence* of God, most evidently follows, the *Necessity of Religion*. For if God be a Being of Infinite *Power*, *Knowledge* and *Wisdom* ; 'tis manifest he is to be *Reverenced*, to be *Honoured*, and to be *Feared*. If he concerns himself with the *Government* of his Creatures, and imployes these Infinite Perfections in *Ruling* and *Ordering* the World ; 'tis manifest he is to be *Worshipped*, *Prayed to*, and *Adored*.

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And if this his Government of the World be regulated by the exactest Measures of Infinite *Goodness*, *Righteousness* and *Truth*; 'tis manifest he is to be *Loved*, to be *Praised*, and to be *Imitated*.

7. And because it cannot be, but that a *just* and *true* and *good* Being, whose *Nature*, and whose *Happiness* consists in the *Perfection* and in the *Exercise* of these Attributes, must be pleased with those Creatures who love to imitate his *Justice*, his *Goodness*, and his *Truth*; therefore there must of Necessity be a Reward laid up in store for Virtue. And those whose Delight it has been to conform themselves to the Likeness of the *Divine Nature*, shall certainly be admitted to partake in some degree of the *Divine Happiness*. Wherefore if this Reward be not given to Virtue in this present Life; if the good Things of this World be distributed not only promiscuously, but even generally to the Disadvantage of the Virtuous, and to the Advantage of those who are Enemies of God and Haters of his Religion; it follows, that if a *righteous* and *good* God has any Regard to *Righteousness* and *Goodness*, there must be a future State, wherein Rewards and Punishments shall be dispensed impartially to Vertue and Vice.

8. Thus

8. Thus *as certain* as is our Knowledge of the Being of God and of the Constitution of Things, *so certain* may we be of the Obligation of Religion, and of the Reward of Virtue. Yet by Experience it hath been found, that these Considerations, however in themselves strong and concluding, have notwithstanding been insufficient so to *convince Mens Judgments* and *Over-rule their Passions*, as to keep them constant in the Knowledge and in the *Practice* of their Duty. The greatest Part of the Gentile World, before the Appearance of the Glorious Light of the Gospel, were an amazing Instance of this. They quickly fell from the Worship of the *true God*, to the Worship of *Idols* and *impure Spirits*; and were thereupon given up to a reprobate Mind, *to work all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs*, Ephes. iv, 19. They were by degrees intangled in all manner of wicked Practices, till their very *Mind and Conſcience was defiled*, Tit. i, 15; and ſo accuſtomed themſelves to *run into all Exceſs of Riot*, that even their moſt *ſacred and religious Performances* became at length the very *extremeſt Abominations*. And though there always were among them ſome *Philophers*, who ſtood up for the *Cauſe of Vertue* and true Religion; yet they never were able to keep together any conſiderable Number of Men, who could *agree among themſelves*

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selves about the *Notion* of the Truth, and persevere in the *practice* of it. Even *That Happiness it self*, which was to be the ultimate End of all Humane Actions, they were so little settled in their Apprehensions about, that St. *Austin* somewhere out of *Varro* reckons up no less than 280 Opinions concerning the *chief Good*. The *Means to attain this Happiness*, namely the great Rules of Morality, they agreed indeed pretty well in; but their *Understandings* they complained were so *dark and cloudy*, their *Wills* so *biased and inclined to Evil*, their *Passions* so *outrageous and rebelling against Reason*, that those Rules were looked upon as hardly practicable. In a word, they confessed that humane Nature was strangely *corrupted*; and they complained of this *Corruption* as a Disease whereof they knew not the *Cause*, and could not find out a sufficient *Remedy*. So that the great Duties of Religion were laid down by them as Matters of *Speculation and Dispute*, rather than *Practice*; and not so much urged upon the *Hearts and Lives* of Men, as proposed to the *Admiration* of those, who thought them scarce possible to be effectually attained to, by the generality of Men. Lastly, The *Method*, by which those who have erred from the right way, and have offended God, may yet again restore themselves to the Favour of God, and to the Hopes of Happiness, the

the Philosophers were in a manner absolutely ignorant of. From the Consideration of the Goodness and Mercifulness of God, they did indeed *reasonably* hope, that God would shew himself placable to Sinners, and might be some way reconciled. But what Propitiation he will accept, and in what manner this Reconciliation must be made, here Nature stops, and expects with Impatience the Aid of some particular Revelation. That God will receive returning Sinners, and accept of Repentance instead of perfect Obedience, *they* cannot certainly know, to whom he has not declared that he *will* do so. For though this be the most probable and only means of Reconciliation that Nature suggests, yet whether this will be alone sufficient, or whether he requires something further before he will restore Men to the Privileges they have forfeited, they cannot be satisfactorily assured. There arises therefore no natural *sufficient* Comfort to Sinners, but an endless and anxious solicitude about the Means of appeasing the Deity. Hence those diverse Ways of Sacrificing and numberless Superstitions, which overspread the Face of the Heathen World; but were so little satisfactory to the wiser part of Mankind, even in those Times of Darkness, that the Philosophers could not sometimes forbear declaring, that they thought those

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Rites could avail little or nothing towards appeasing the Wrath of a provoked God, or making their Prayers acceptable in his Sight. Infomuch that *Plato* in the Person of *Socrates* speaks out, that since they knew not in what manner to apply themselves acceptably unto God, he expected and did assure himself, that in due time some Person would be sent from God, who should declare to them his Will in that Particular.

9. And now, if these wisest of Philosophers were thus puzzled about that which was their highest Concern; how are the *Disputers* of our Age certain, that if themselves had lived without the Light of the Gospel, they should have made such a right Use of their Reason, as to have discovered the Truth *exactly*, without being any way led aside by Prejudice or Interest? If their Lot had been among the *Vulgar*, how are they sure they should have been so happy, or so considerate, as not to have been involved in that Idolatry and Superstition, which over-spread the whole World? If they had joyned themselves to the *Philosophers*, which Sect would they have chosen to have followed, and what Book would they have resolved upon to be the adequate Rule of their Lives and Conversations? Or, if they would have set up for themselves; how are they certain they

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should have been skilful and unprejudiced enough, to have deduced the several Branches of their Duty, and applied them to the several Cases of Life, by Argumentation and dint of Reason? 'Tis one Thing to see that those Rules of Life, which are before-hand plainly and particularly laid before us, are perfectly agreeable to Reason; and another Thing to find out those Rules meerly by the Light of Reason, without their having first been any otherwise made known. We see that even many of those, who profess to govern their Lives by the *plain written Rule* of an *instituted and revealed Religion*, are yet most miserably ignorant of their Duty; And how can any Man be sure he should have made so good Improvement of his Reason, as to have *understood it perfectly* in all its Parts, without any such Help? We see that many of those, who profess to believe firmly that *great and everlasting Happiness* which Christ has promised to Obedience, and that *great and eternal Misery* which Christ has threatned to Disobedience; are yet hurried away by their Lusts and Passions to transgress the Conditions of that Covenant, to which these Promises and these Threatnings are annexed. And how can any Man be sure he should be able to overcome those great Temptations, if these mighty Motives were less *distinctly known*, or less *powerfully enforced*?

ced? But suppose he could, and that by strength of Reason he could demonstrate to himself these Things with all *clearness and distinctness*; yet could all Men do so? Affuredly all Men are not *equally* capable of being *Philosophers*, though all Men are *equally obliged* to be *Religious*. At least thus much is certain, that the Rewards and Punishments of another World, the great Motives of Religion, cannot be so *powerfully enforced* to the influencing the Lives and Practice of all Sorts of Men, by one who shall undertake to demonstrate the Reality of them by Force of Reason and Arguments; as by one who showing sufficient Credentials of his having been himself there, shall assure them of the Truth and Certainty of these Things.

10. Though therefore nothing be more evident to Reason, than the *Necessity of Religion* in general, and the *Certainty of the Reward of Virtue*; yet *because* 'tis too nice and laborious a Work in a Matter of such vast Importance, for Men of all Capacities to discover by the Light of Nature all the particular Branches of their Duty; and *because* in the Discovery of such Matters as are the great Motives of Religion, Men are apt to be more *easily wrought upon*, and more *strongly affected*, by *Testimony* than by *Arguments*; and *because* some Things necessary in our present corrupt State, (such

as, for instance, the *Means by which a Sinner may appease God after he has offended him,*) cannot certainly be discovered by the Light of Nature and Reason at all ; therefore there is evidently a Necessity of some particular *Revelation*, which may supply these Defects. And this the Heathens themselves were so sensible of, that there never was any Principal Law-giver among them, who did not pretend to receive his Laws, or at least his Instructions for making those Laws, by some Divine Revelation. And *Plato* in a most remarkable Passage acknowledges so plainly the Want of such a Revelation, as even to question whether it would not be better that Men should forbear Sacrificing wholly, till such time as God should discover to them in what manner he would have it done. 'Tis therefore agreeable to the natural Expectation of Men, that God should make some particular Revelation of his Will, which may supply the Defects of the Light of Nature. And, that it is not unworthy of the Wisdom of God to make such a Revelation ; is also evident. For can any Man say, that it is an unwise Thing, for the Creator of the World to reveal to his Creatures more fully the Way to Happiness, and the Means of becoming like himself? Can any Man say, that it is an unwise Thing, for God to declare what Satisfaction he will accept for Sin,

Sin, and upon what Conditions he will receive returning Sinners? Can any Man say, that it is a Thing unworthy of the Wisdom of God, to make particular Discoveries of his Will to his Creatures, and to set before them in a clearer Light the Rewards and Punishments of a future State? This is so manifest, that nothing needs further be said about it.

II. Now that the *Christian Religion* is such a particular Revelation, *actually* made by God: That the *peculiar Duties*, which it enjoyns, are *indeed* the *express Commands* of God; and the *peculiar Motives*, by which it enforces those Duties, *Things true and in reality established by God*: Of this we have all the Proof that the Nature of the Thing will bear, and that is agreeable either to the *Wisdom of God* to give, or the *Reason of Men* to expect. To represent the Motives which are to enforce the Practice of any Thing, more evidently and strongly, than is consistent with the Nature of the Thing designed to be enforced, is *inconsistent with the Wisdom of an All-wise God*; and to expect other Proof of any Thing, than what the Nature of the Thing to be proved is capable of, is *unreasonable in the Judgment of understanding Men*. The Design then of Religion, being to make Men *Happy* by making them *Religious*; that is, to make *Happiness* not

the *Fate of Mens Nature*, but the *Reward of their Vertue*; 'tis plain the Motives of Religion ought of necessity to be such, as might abundantly encourage all wise Men to cleave inseparably to their Duty as to their Life, and yet leave room for Men desperately wicked and incorrigible to avoid being forced into the Possession of that Happiness, which they are not willing to purchase at the Price of being Religious. The Reward of everlasting Life promised to Obedience, and the Punishment of eternal Misery threatned to Disobedience, are Motives in themselves *infinitely* and *irresistibly* strong. For were the Happiness of Heaven, and the Torments of Hell, openly exposed to view, and proposed as the immediate and present Consequence of a Man's chusing or refusing his Duty; it would be as impossible for a Man in actual View of these two different States, not to choose his Duty and refuse the contrary, as for a heavy Body not to fall downward to the Ground. Though therefore the infinitely gracious and merciful God has indeed proposed to us these great and most powerful Motives, that Men by choosing their *Duty* might choose their *Life*, and become *Happy* in consequence of their becoming *Religious*; yet hath he so proposed them, invisible at present and at a Distance, that good Men might have some exercise of
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their Virtue by choosing their *Duty* in order to their *Happiness*, and that Men obstinately impenitent might not partake of the *Happiness*, without choosing the *Duty* to which that *Happiness* is annexed. Again, the Nature of a revealed Institution of Religion being such, that, excepting *the agreeableness of its Doctrines to the eternal Rule of Reason*, the chief Evidence of its being from God, must of necessity depend upon *credible Testimonies of Matter of Fact*; 'tis manifest that *That Evidence*, of which such Matters of Fact are capable, ought to be accounted sufficient in the present Case; And to require greater Proof than the Nature of the Thing will bear, is absurd and unreasonable.

12. That the Christian Religion therefore is *indeed* a Revelation, *sufficiently* demonstrated to be from God, may be satisfactorily evidenced to a Man's own Mind by These Considerations. That the *Duties* which it enjoyns are all such, as are most agreeable to our Natural Notions of God, and most conducive to the happiness, and well-being of Men. That the *Motives* by which it enforces those Duties, are such as are most suitable to the excellent Wisdom of God, and most answerable to the natural Expectations of Men. That the *peculiar Circumstances*, with which it enjoyns these Duties, and urges these Motives, are such as are

most *exactly consonant to the Light of Nature*, and most *wisely perfective of it*. And, that all these Things are proved moreover to be taught and confirmed of God, by the most *credible and convincing Testimony* that ever was given to any Matter of Fact in the World.

13. In the first Place, the *Duties* which the Christian Religion enjoyns, are all such, as are most *agreeable to our natural Notions of God*, and most *conducive to the Happiness and Well-being of Men*. This is a Proof, which were alone sufficient to convince a wise Man of a Religion's being from God. For that Institution of Religion, which requires no other Duties, than what are *perfectly agreeable to the eternal and unchangeable Law of God*, and manifestly *perfective of the Moral Vertue and the Happiness of Men*, has already the Mark of God upon it, and cannot possibly but come from him. The *Nature and Life of God* are unchangeable, and the *Constitution of his Laws is also unchangeable*. Whoever therefore preaches and institutes such a Religion, as leads Men to nothing else, but to the *Obedience of the Laws*, and to the *Imitation of the Nature and Life of God*; may without any other Testimonials, be admitted as a Preacher of Divine Truth: And That Religion, which stands on such a Foundation, is of it self sufficiently recommended

commended to the Belief and to the Practice of all Wise Men. Now that the Christian Religion is such an Institution, is so plain and evident, that its greatest Adversaries have hardly been able to deny it. The Duties of *Love, Fear, and Adoration*, which it obliges us to render unto God, are so manifestly incumbent upon us on consideration of the excellent Attributes of the Divine Nature, and our Relation to him as our Creator and Preserver, that no Man who considers, can break loose from the Obligations with our Religion lays upon him to practice these Duties, without denying the very Being of God, and acting contrary to the Reason and all the Natural Notions of his own Mind. The Duties of *Justice Righteousness and Truth*, which the Christian Religion commands us to exercise towards Men, are so apparently reasonable, and so directly conducive to the Happiness of Mankind; that even those Men who have broken through all the Bonds of Religion and the Obligations of Vertue, have yet thought it necessary to the Preservation of Society, and the well-being of Mankind, that the Observation of these Duties should be enforced by the Penalties of Humane Laws. The Duties of *Sobriety, Temperance and Contentment*, which our Religion enjoins us to practice in *our selves*, are so undeniably agreeable

greeable to the inward Constitution of Humane Nature, and so perfective of it, that the Principal Design of all true Philosophy was to recommend and set off these Duties to the best Advantage ; though, as the Philosophers themselves confessed, it never was able to work Men up to that pitch of cheerful and generous Obedience to the Rules of these Duties, which the Christian Religion in its primitive and purest State was acknowledged to have done, and which, if it were now believed and practised as it then was, it must still do. Lastly, Even those *positive and external Observances*, (such as the *Sacraments*, &c.) which are instituted in the Christian Religion as Means and Assistances to keep Men stedfast in the Practice of those *great and moral Duties* which are the *weightier Matters of the Law* ; are so free from all Appearance of Superstition and Vanity, and so wisely fitted to the End for which they were designed ; that many of the Adversaries of our Religion have yet been forced to admire the Wisdom and the Excellency of their Institution.

14. Again : The *Principal Motives* of the Christian Religion, I mean the Discovery of a future State, and the Rewards and Punishments therein to be dispensed ; are Things so *suitable to the excellent Wisdom of God*, and so *agreeable to the unprejudiced Reason*,

son, to the Natural Apprehensions and Expectations of Men ; that, were their Truth and Reality confirmed by no other Argument or external Proof, yet were they sufficient to influence the Practice, and regulate the Actions of wise and considerate Men. *That* the Soul of Man is immortal, and shall survive after the Dissolution of this corruptible Body, is a Truth which has always been thought demonstrable from Principles of Reason, and from the Consideration of the Nature of the Thing. *That* Man is a Creature capable of doing Good or Evil, and consequently of giving Account of his Actions, and being judged for them, is also evident. *That* therefore in a future State there shall be a Time of Retribution, wherein every Man shall receive of God according to what he has done in this Life, whether it be Good or Evil ; has been collected by the wiser and more considerate part of Men among the Heathens themselves. The *Resurrection of the Body*, has indeed been looked upon by most of the Philosophers, as a Thing utterly absurd and impossible. But there is nothing impossible in the Nature of the Thing. And the *Jews*, who had no express Revelation of that Matter, did yet believe it upon a constant Tradition ; as appears from all their Writings, and particularly from the Translation of the last Verse of the

Book of *Job*, which according to the *Seventy* runs thus ; So *Job* died, being old and full of Days, but 'tis written that he shall rise again with those whom the Lord raises up.

15. Further ; The peculiar Circumstances, with which the Duties and the Motives of the Christian Religion are enlarged and enforced, are such as are most *exactly agreeable to the Light of Nature*, and most *wisely perfective of it*. For, what can be more perfective of the Light of Nature, than to have those Duties, which Nature hints at *only in general*, explained *fully and largely*, and urged *in particular*, and inculcated upon the meanest Capacities, and *exemplified* in the Lives of Holy Persons proposed as Patterns for Men's Imitation ? What can be more perfective of the Light of Nature, than to have those great Motives of Religion, the Rewards and Punishments of a future State, which Nature *only obscurely* points at, *described to us most plainly, affectionately and lively* ? What can be more perfective of the Light of Nature, than to have the Means of atoning for Sin, which Nature *discovers only the Want of*, plainly declared and exhibited to us ? What can be more perfective of the Light of Nature, than such a Discovery of the *Heinousness of Sin* and the *Necessity of Holiness*, as the *Death of Christ* and the *Purity of the Gospel* does
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make unto us? In fine, what can more effectually perfect the Religion of Nature, than the *gathering the Worshippers of God into one Body*, the *uniting them by certain positive Rites in one common Communion for mutual Assistance and Improvement*, and the *establishing a certain Order of Men, whose Business may be to promote the Interest of Religion, by instructing the Ignorant, and by admonishing the Wicked?*

16. Lastly, Besides all these Proofs of the Truth of the Christian Revelation, drawn from the Consideration of the Nature of the Thing; God has moreover confirmed it by the most *undeniable external Evidence, that ever was given to any Matter of Fact in the World*. The great *Motives of the Christian Religion*, are Things not only *most probable and most credible in themselves*, but God has moreover confirmed the Certainty of them by *most clear Testimony*, (which is a Proof suited to all Capacities;) and has most strongly urged upon Men the Rewards and Punishments of a future State, by the *Preachings and Exhortations* of one, who by that convincing Proof of his *Resurrection from the Dead*, did undeniably demonstrate that *he had himself been there*, and was able to give Men a satisfactory Account of the Nature of that State. The great *Duties of the Christian Religion*, are Things not only *most reasonable and most*
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excellent in themselves, but they are moreover taught and inculcated by one who has given the most credible and most convincing Evidence that could possibly be desired, of his being sent immediately from God. The Miracles which our Saviour wrought, were to his first Disciples, who were Eye-witnesses of them, a most perfect Demonstration of the Truth of his Doctrine. And the History of his Life, Death and Resurrection, delivered down to us upon the Testimony of those Disciples, are to Us also a sufficient Evidence of the same Truth. Their having conversed from the Beginning with our Saviour himself; their having heard, and having seen with their Eyes; their having looked upon, and having handled with their Hands of the Word of Life, (as St. John expresses it, 1 John i, 1.) made it impossible that they should be deceived themselves. And their whole Life and Conversation, their Sufferings and Deaths, were invincible Proofs against the Adversaries of Christianity, that they had no Design of imposing upon others. They saw all the Prophecies of the Old Testament precisely fulfilled in the Life and Doctrine, the Sufferings and Death of our Blessed Saviour; They saw him confirm what he taught with such mighty Works, as his bitterest and most malicious Enemies could not but confess to be above the Power of Nature, even while they were blaspheming
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that Holy Spirit which wrought them ; They saw the *whole Course of his Life* to be such, as to all unprejudiced Beholders loudly proclaimed his *Divine Commission* ; They saw him so constantly *despise all worldly Greatness*, as once when the People would have made him a *King*, even to work a *Miracle to avoid that*, which was the only Thing that was possible to be *the Aim and Design* of an Impostor. In fine, they saw him *alive after his Passion*, by many *infallible Proofs*, Acts 1, 3 ; conversing with him for forty Days together, and at last beholding him *ascend visibly into Heaven*. These were such *Demonstrations* of his being a Teacher sent from Heaven, and consequently that his Doctrine was nothing less than an immediate and express Revelation of the Will of God, that nothing but the *extremest Malice and Obstinacy* could withstand them. And the same Reason that these Disciples of our Saviour had to believe *his Doctrine*, the same Reason the rest of the World had to believe *theirs*. They *confirmed* what they taught, by *Signs and Miracles* ; they *lived* according to the Doctrine they *Preached*, though manifestly contrary to all the Interests and Pleasures of this present World ; and, which no Deceiver could ever do, they *died* with all imaginable chearfulness and joy of Mind, for the Testimony of their Doctrine, and

the Confirmation of their Religion. So that unless God should work upon Men by such Methods, as are wholly inconsistent with the Design of Religion, and the Nature of Vertue and Vice; which we are sure he will not do; nothing can be done more than has already been done, to *convince Men of Religion*, and to *perswade them to Happiness*. 'Tis true, the Resurrection of Christ is not such an ocular Demonstration to After-generations, as it was to those Men who *then lived and saw him, and conversed with him*. But since the Matter of Fact is as clearly proved to *us*, as 'tis possible for any Matter of Fact at that distance of Time to be; since the Evidence of *this* is as great and greater, than most of those Things on which Men venture the whole of their Secular Affairs, and on which they are willing to spend all their Time and Pains: Since (I say) the Case is thus: He that will rather venture all that he can possibly enjoy or suffer; he that will run the hazard of losing Eternal Happiness, and falling into Eternal Misery, rather than believe the *most credible and rational Thing* in the World, meerly because he does *not see it with his Eyes*; 'tis plain that *that* Man does not dis-believe the Thing, because he thinks the *Evidence of it not sufficiently strong*, but because 'tis *contrary to some particular Interest of his* that it should be true; and for that

that Reason he might also have dis-believed it, though he had seen it himself.

17. This is in brief the Evidence which we have, of the *Necessity of Religion* in general, and of the *Truth of the Christian Institution* in particular. And he that would so lay the Foundation of a Religious Life, as to be able to conquer all the Temptations of the World, and persevere in Well-doing to the End, must *at least so far* consider this Evidence, as before all Things to work in his own Mind a *Firm, Settled and Well-grounded* Belief of the great Truths of Religion. To produce which Effect, this Evidence is most abundantly sufficient. For if in other Cases we assent to those Things as *certain and demonstrated*, which if our *Faculties of Judging and Reasoning* do not necessarily deceive us, do upon the most impartial View appear clearly and plainly to be true; there is the same Reason, why in *Moral and Religious* Matters, we should look upon those Things likewise to be *certain and demonstrated*, which upon the exactest and most deliberate Judgment that we are capable of making, do appear to us to be as clearly and as certainly true, as 'tis certain that our *Faculties* do not *necessarily and unavoidably* deceive us in all our *Judgments concerning the Nature of God, concerning the proper Happiness of Man, and concerning the Difference of Good and Evil.* And

And if in other Cases, we always act without the least hesitation upon the Credit of good and sufficient Testimony, and look upon that Man as foolish and ridiculous, who sustains great Losses, and lets slip great Opportunities and Advantages in Business, only by distrusting the most credible and well-attested Things in the World; 'tis plain there is the same Reason, why we should do so also in Matters of Religion. So that unless our Actions be determined by some other Thing, than by Reason and Judgment; the Evidence which we have of the great Truths of Religion, ought to have the same Effect upon our Lives and Actions, as if they were proved to us by any other sort of Evidence that could be desired.

18. There are indeed some Men, who being conscious to themselves that they act contrary to all the reasonable Evidence and Convictions of Religion, are yet apt to imagine, that if the great Truths of Religion were proved to them by some stronger Evidence, they *should* by that means be wrought upon to act otherwise than they do. But if the true Reason why these Men act thus foolishly, is not because *the Doctrines of Religion* are not sufficiently evidenced, but because *they themselves* are hurried away by some unruly Passions, to act directly contrary to all Reason and Evidence ;

dence ; 'tis plain (unless God should irresistibly compel them) they might well continue to act as they do, though the Evidence of these Things were really greater than it is. They are willing to imagine, that if they had lived in our Saviour's Time ; if they had heard his Preaching and seen his Miracles ; if they had had the Advantage of beholding those mighty Works, which he wrought for the Proof of his Divine Commission, as the *Jews* then had ; they should not, like them, *have rejected the Counsel of God against themselves*, Luke vii, 30 ; but with all chearfulness have believed his Doctrine, and embraced his Religion. They fancy they should immediately have become Disciples of Christ ; and that the Truths which he taught, would have had a most powerful Influence upon the whole Course of their Lives. And if their Hearts and Affections were not set upon this World, more than upon the next : if they valued not the *present Enjoyment of Sense*, above the *expectation of the Glory that shall be revealed* ; most certainly they would do the same now. But if their Hearts be set upon earthly Things, and their Passions be stronger than all the Arguments of Reason ; if they do indeed so love the Pleasures of Sin now, as that they cannot persuade themselves by all the Motives of Religion to live like Christians ;

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we need not doubt to affirm, that they might very well have been in the same Case, though they had lived in our Saviour's Time. The *Jews* are a notorious and standing Instance, how far Prejudice and Affection are able to prevail over the strongest Convictions. When our Saviour began to Preach, that he was sent from God to instruct them in their Duty, they required a *Sign* of him, and they *would believe* him; but when he had wrought so many Miracles, that *even the World it self could not contain the Books*, Jo. xxi, 25. *if they should all be written*, they persisted still in their Infidelity. When they saw him hanging upon the Cross, and thought themselves secure of him, they said, *Let him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe him*, Mat. xxvii, 42; but when he arose out of the Grave wherein he had lain three Days, which was a much greater and more convincing Miracle, they grew more hardned and obstinate in their Unbelief.

19. Others there are who imagine, that if they could but be convinced of the Truth of another World, by the Appearance of one sent directly from that unknown State, they would immediately become new Creatures. But if God should satisfy their unreasonable Demands, by sending one on Purpose from the Dead to convince

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convince them ; I doubt not, but as they hearkned not to *Moses and the Prophets*, so neither would they be perswaded by one rising from the Dead, Luk. xvi, 31. They might indeed at first be surprized and terrified, at the Appearance of so unusual and unexpected a Messenger. But as wicked Men upon a Bed of Sickness, at the amazing approach of Death and Eternity, resolve in the utmost anguish of Horror and Despair, to amend their Lives and forsake their Sins ; but as soon as the Terror is over, and the Danger of Death past, return to their old habits of Sin and Folly ; so it is more than probable it would be in the present Case. Should God send a Messenger from the Dead, to assure Men of the Certainty of a future State, and the Danger of their present Wickedness ; as soon as the Fright was over, and their present terrible Apprehensions ceased, 'tis by no means impossible that their old vicious Habits and beloved Sins should again by degrees prevail over them. Many there are in our present Age, who pretend to be convinced of the Being of Spirits by the powerful Demonstration of their own Senses ; and yet we do not observe, that their Lives are more remarkably eminent for exemplary Piety, than theirs, who being convinced by the less violent but more rational Evidence of the Gospel, go on in a
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sober, constant, and regular Exercise of Virtue and Righteousness.

20. In sum therefore ; *Consider* that the Evidence of Religion is such, as upon the fullest View of Things, and the exactest and most deliberate Judgment that we can possibly make, ought infinitely to determine the Actions of a wise Man ; *Consider* that the great Doctrines of Religion are of such a Nature, that upon the final upshot of Things, if all our *Knowledge* be not *Deceit*, if all our *Hopes and Fears* be not *Vain*, if there be any *Good*, if there be any *Evil*, if there be any *Excellency*, if there be any *Happiness*, these Things *must* be true. *Consider* this, I say, thoroughly ; and then *Resolve*, deliberately and with full perswasion of Mind, to act always suitably to this Consideration, and to put all upon this one Issue. And when *Temptation* and *Melancholy* shall succeed ; when *vain Scruples* and *unreasonable Suspicions*, shall cloud the Understanding and perplex the Mind ; be sure to stick immoveably to that *Resolution*, which has once been founded upon the wisest Judgment and the fullest Conviction possible. And when the present Indisposition of Mind shall be over, Things will again appear in their true Light, and the first *Resolution* will grow continually stronger.

21. Only

21. Only in the last Place, and above all, be sure to fix these Things deeply upon the Mind, by frequent and serious Meditation. The Passions and Affections of Men are strong; and unless these also can by some Means be interested, the bare Conviction of a Man's Judgment will hardly be able to govern constantly all the Actions of his Life. 'Tis not enough that we be convinced in our Judgment, of the Truth of the great Doctrines of Religion; but we must by constant Meditation fix and inculcate them upon the Mind, that they may move our Passions and excite our Affections. Be not content to believe slightly the Being of God, but represent him frequently in your Mind with the most lively Characters of Glory and Majesty. Consider him as that Supreme Being, who hath measured the Waters in the hollow of his Hand, and meted out Heaven with a Span, and comprehended the Dust of the Earth in a Measure, and weighed the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Balance, Isaiah xl, 12; to whom all Nations are as a drop of the Bucket, and are counted as the small Dust of the Balance. Consider him as that All-powerful Being, before whom the Pillars of Heaven tremble, and are astonished at his Reproof, Job xxvi, 11; before whom all Nations are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and Vanity, Isaiah xl, 17. Be not content to believe

believe in general the *Providence of God*; but think of him always as actually present, observing all our Words and Actions, and understanding even our *Thoughts afar off*, Psal. cxxxix, 2. Be not content to believe in general a *Judgment to come*, but frequently represent to your self the Solemnity and the Terror of that great Day. Imagine our Saviour sitting in Judgment, as in that Prophetical Allusion, *Dan. vii, 9*; with his *Throne like the fiery Flame*, and his *Wheels as burning Fire*; *A fiery Stream issuing*, and coming forth from before him; *Thousand Thousands ministring unto him*, and *ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him*; the *Judgment set*, and the *Books opened*. Lastly, be not content to believe slightly and in general a state of *Reward or Punishment for Virtue or Vice*; But meditate frequently on the Happiness of those, who shall be admitted to the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, to the general Assembly of the *First-born*, to an innumerable company of *Angels*, and to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the *New Covenant*, Heb. xii, 23. Consider the Happiness of those, who shall be made *Kings and Priests unto God*, Rev. v, 10. and shall reign with him for ever; who shall shine as the brightness of the *Firmament*, and as the Stars for ever and ever, Dan. xii, 3. And on the other Hand meditate seriously on the Misery of those, who shall be cast into the

the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched, Mark ix, 44; and where they shall be tormented Day and Night for ever and ever, Rev. xx, 10.

22. I have been the longer upon this Head, because 'tis the first and most necessary Foundation of all Religion; and because that *slight, careless, and only customary* Assent to the great Truths of Religion, which is the Summ of most Men's Faith, seems to be the chief Reason why Things of the utmost Importance have so small an Effect upon the Lives and Actions of Men. There is no need that every Man should proceed just by those Steps, which I have set down; But whoever will indeed make Religion the Business of his Life, must by some like Method work in his Mind, a *firm and well-grounded Belief* of all its great Doctrines, and a *deep and vigorous Sense* of them.



C H A P III.

Of right Notions concerning Religion in general.

1. **S**Econdly, *Endeavour to attain right Notions concerning Religion in general.* Next to the Belief of the Truth and Necessity of Religion, there is nothing of greater Importance than the framing right Notions concerning the Nature of it. For when Religion is represented as requiring any Thing, that is either not possible or not necessary to be practiced; when 'tis represented as consisting in such Things, as are either not worthy of God, or not profitable to Men; in a word, when Religion is so represented, that Men may hope to be religious without being virtuous, and to be accepted of God for some outward Performances, without a holy Temper and Disposition of Mind; this cuts the very Sinews and undermines the Foundation of all Religion.

2. Now therefore to attain right Notions concerning the Nature of Religion, a Man ought firmly to perswade himself of these following Considerations. That the exercise of those great Moral Virtues, of Godliness, Righteousness and Temperance, which are the eternal and unchangeable Law of God, is a Thing in its own Nature both truly excellent,

cellent, and indispensably necessary to prepare Men for that Happiness which is the Reward of Religion. That God truly and sincerely desires to make Men happy, by the Exercise of these Virtues. And that therefore the great and ultimate Design of all true Religion, is to recommend these Virtues, and to enforce their Practice.

3. That the Exercise of these great Moral Virtues of Godliness, Righteousness and Temperance, which are the eternal and unchangeable Law of God, is a Thing in its own Nature truly Noble and Excellent, is evidently acknowledged by the common Consent and Verdict of all Men's Consciences. These Virtues are the Imitation of the Perfections of God. And as no Man is so brutish, as not to admire the Perfections of Justice and Goodness, when he considers them abstractedly in God; so he cannot but pay a proportionable respect to whatever he sees carry their Resemblance in Men. Hence Virtue is the most lovely and venerable of all Things, and approves it self to the Reason and Consciences of Men. Hence Vice becomes truly odious; and, however it may insinuate it self into the Practice, yet it can never recommend it self to the Judgment of Mankind. Hence even those very Persons, who by the prevailing Power of some Interest or Lust are themselves drawn aside out of the Paths of Virtue, cannot

yet forbear to give it its true Character and Commendation in *others*. Thus the Officers, who were sent by the *Pharisees* to apprehend Jesus, could not forbear declaring, that *he spake as never Man spake*, John vii, 46 ; and the Roman Governour, when he gave Sentence that he should be crucified, could not at the same instant forbear openly professing, that *he found no Fault in him*, John xviii, 38. Men cannot chuse but think well of that Virtue, which the *Dominion of their Lusts* forces them to *desert*, or the *necessity of their Affairs* compels them to *discourage*. They cannot but wish, they were the Men they are not ; and pray with *Balaam*, that though they *imitate not the Life*, yet at least they might *die the Death of the Righteous*, and that their *last End* may be like his, Num. xxiii, 10. Though therefore *virtuous Men* are frequently persecuted in the World, and sometimes *meerly for their Virtue* ; yet 'tis not because Virtue can ever be hated, but because those from whom they suffer, mistake it to be what it is not : or else because, knowing it to be what it is, they are notwithstanding prevailed upon by some private Interest, to persecute it contrary to the Judgment of their Conscience, which would force them to honour and respect it. An Instance of the *former Case*, are all the Persecutions of the Christians in the Primitive Times. 'Tis
certain

certain these Men were *Virtuous and Religious*, and 'tis certain they suffered *meerly upon that Account*. But then 'tis also as certain, that those from whom they suffered, did not persecute them because they thought them *Religious*, but because they mistook them *not to be so*; they did not persecute them because they thought them to be *worshippers of the true God*, but because they looked on them as *despisers of their false ones*. They were so unhappily blinded by Prejudice and Idolatry, that they mistook *Religion for Superstition*, and *Superstition for Religion*. Hence they implacably persecuted that Doctrine, whose Evidence and Conviction, if they would have opened their Eyes, they could not have resisted; and endeavoured to root out the *true Religion*, out of Zeal to the Honour of a *false one*. An eminent Instance of the *latter Case*, is the Condemnation of our Saviour. He was manifestly *innocent* of the Crimes laid to his Charge, and *Pilate knew him to be so*; but then 'tis also manifest, that he did not condemn him because he was Innocent, but because he was *willing to do the Jews a Pleasure*, Acts xxiv, 27. Our Saviour's Innocence was sufficient to convince the Mind of his Judge; and 'twas only Interest, that overpowered the Force of that Conviction. Virtue therefore is truly *Noble and Excellent* in it self; and wicked Men, even while

they are persecuting it, cannot deny it to be so.

4. Again : That *the Exercise of those great Moral Virtues, of Godliness, Righteousness and Temperance, is a Thing indispensably necessary to prepare Men for that Happiness which is the Reward of Religion*, is evident from the Consideration of the Nature of that Happiness. The Happiness which Religion promises to holy and good Men, is this ; That they shall be received into the blessed Society of *Angels*, and of the *Spirits of just Men made perfect*, Heb. xii, 23 ; and that with them they shall be admitted into the immediate Presence of God, to enjoy that Satisfaction which must necessarily arise from the *Contemplation of his Perfections*, and from the *Sense of his Favour*. And if this be the Case, then nothing is more evident, than that the *exercise of Virtue* is indispensably necessary to prepare Men for the *Enjoyment of this Happiness*. For, what Agreement can there be between a *sensual, spiteful or malicious Soul*, and the pure Society of the *Spirits of just Men made perfect* ? We see even in this Life, how ungrateful the Society of good Men is, unto those that are wicked ; And as it is in this, so doubtless it will be in the other World. Those Souls which have been wholly *immersed in Sense*, and *given up to the Pleasures of this sinful World*, can never be fit
Company

Company for those *spiritual* and *refined* Minds, whose Desires and Enjoyments are as far exalted above every Thing that is gross and sensual, as Heaven is above Earth. And those *malicious* Spirits, whose Delight upon *Earth* was in nothing but *Hatred*, *Envy*, and *Revenge*; can never converse in Heaven with those Divine Souls, who feed and live upon no other Pleasures, but those of *Goodness*, *Holiness* and *Love*. In like manner, what can be more impossible, than for an *earthly and wicked* Soul, to be made Happy by the *Vision and Fruition of God*? To *see God*, is to behold and contemplate those Glorious Perfections, of infinite *Goodness*, *Purity* and *Truth*; and to *enjoy God*, is so to love and adore those amiable Perfections, as to be transformed into the Likeness and Resemblance of them. And is it possible for a wicked Soul, to be made partaker of this Happiness? Tell a *covetous Worldling* of a *Treasure* laid up in *Heaven*; where neither *Moth* nor *Rust* doth corrupt, and where *Thieves* do not break through and steal, Matt. vi, 20: Tell him of a *never-fading Inheritance* in the World to come, or of a *City* not made with *Hands*, whose *Builder and Maker* is *God*, Heb. xi, 10. Tell an *ambitious* aspiring Mind, of the *Glory* that shall be revealed hereafter, Rom. viii, 18; or a *voluptuous Person*, of *spiritual* and *refined Pleasures* which *Eye* hath not

seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into the Heart of Man to conceive them, 1 Cor. ii, 9; And will they have any Relish of these Things? Will they not be much more inquisitive after the *Glories of the Earth*, and the *Gratifications of Sense*? So that unless we suppose God should work a Miracle for these Men, and when he removes them into another World, should transform them also into new Creatures; 'tis no more possible for them to enjoy the Happiness of Heaven, than for *Body* to enjoy the Pleasures of *Spirit*, or for *Darkness* to have Communion and Agreement with *Light*. I do not say, That if God should transplant these Men into Heaven, he *could* not make them happy there; but while they are so exceedingly indisposed for it, nothing is more certain than that he never *will*. The *Exercise* therefore of *Virtue*, is the indispensable *Condition of Happiness*. And in Proportion as we draw nearer to the *Perfection of Virtue*, so do we to the *Fountain and Perfection of Happiness*. The greater Degrees of Virtue any Being is indued with, so much the higher Rank does it obtain in the Order of Creatures. The highest Angels, so much as they obey the Will of God *more intirely*, and imitate the Divine Life *more perfectly* than Men do, so much are they exalted *above* Men, and have a nearer Approach to the immediate Presence and Enjoyment

joyment of God. And by how much one Man in *this Life* obtains a greater Degree of *Holiness* than another ; so much a more excellent Degree of *Happiness* is he prepared to receive in the *World to come*.

5. And that God, agreeably to this natural Order of Things, *does truly and sincerely desire to make Men happy by the Exercise of Virtue*, is evident both from our *natural Notions of God*, and from the *Revealed Declaration of his Will*. God, who is a Being infinitely happy in the Enjoyment of himself ; and who created all Things for no other Reason, but to communicate to them his Perfections and his Happiness ; *cannot possibly but make every Man as happy, as the Condition of his Nature, and the Improvement of his Virtue make him capable to be*. And that he *will* do so, he hath moreover assured us by most express and repeated Declarations. He declares that his *Delight* is in them that fear him, and that he *Rejoices* over them for Good. He *invites* Men with all the tender Promises of a compassionate Father, to Repentance and Reformation ; and *swears by himself*, that he hath no Pleasure in the Destruction of the Wicked, but earnestly desires that they should return and live. And nothing can be more absurd, than to imagine that God has *secretly* made any Determination, which may be contrary to what

he has so *openly and expressly* revealed. *What sort of Men he has decreed to be happy or miserable*, he has clearly and fully declared to us in his Word: And *other Decrees* than this, if he has *at all* made any, 'tis neither *necessary* nor *possible* for us to know. Sufficient it is for us, that *as sure as God and his Scriptures are true, so sure are we*, that he that *believes, and obeys* the Gospel shall be *happy*; and that God neither *has, nor can* decree any thing, whereby a *truly Religious Man* may be excluded from *Happiness*, or a *Sincere Man* from the *possibility of becoming truly Religious*.

6. Since therefore God *truly and sincerely* desires to make Men Happy by the *Exercise of Virtue*; and since *That Virtue, which is the Condition of this Happiness, is no other than the Practise of those great Moral Duties, of Godliness, Righteousness and Temperance, which are the Eternal and unchangeable Law of God*; as has already been shown; it follows necessarily, that the *great and ultimate Design of all true Religion, can be no other than to recommend these Virtues, and to enforce their Practise*. Other Things may be *Helps and Assistances of Religion*; Many *External Observances* may for wise Reasons be *positively* commanded; and may be of exceeding great Use, as *means to promote Devotion and Piety*. But the *Life and Substance of all true Religion, the*

End and Scope in which all Things else must terminate, cannot possibly be any other, than the *Practice of these Great and Eternal Duties.*

7. In *Natural Religion* this is very evident. For the Foundation of its Obligations being nothing else, but a due Consideration of the *Nature of God*, and his *Relation to Men*; 'tis plain, all that these Things naturally lead Men to, was only to keep up in themselves such a Holy Temper and Disposition of Mind, as might discover it self in a constant Endeavour of being *Like unto God*, and of *obeying his Laws*. And though this most *simple and absolute* Religion, did thro' the Corruption of Men's Wills and Affections, quickly degenerate into the *grosslest Idolatry*, and most *ridiculous Superstition*; though instead of *real and substantial Virtue*, the generality of Men soon fell into the Observance of *foolish and absurd Rites*, and the World was overspread with *Ignorance and Vice*; yet the wisest and most considerate Men amongst the Heathens always understood, that God did not look so much at the *Outward Pomp and Ceremonies* of Religion, as at the *Inward Holiness and Purity* of the Heart; that God valued not *Sacrifices and rich Offerings*, but only the *Piety and Devotion* of the Mind. And that the only way to keep the Favour of God, was to *imitate his Nature*, and to *obey his Commands*.

8. Nor is it less evident that the great and ultimate Design of the *Jewish Religion* was to preserve and Increase the Moral Virtue of Men. For though God did impose upon the *Jews* a burdensom System of *Rites and Ordinances*: yet 'tis plain he did it, not that he took any Delight in that *External and Ceremonial Service*; but that by condescending in that manner to the Infirmities and Prejudices of a stiff-necked People, he might keep up the Worship of the True God, and restore that Holiness and Inward Religion of Mens Minds, which the Light of Nature had not been sufficient to maintain. This therefore God perpetually inculcates to them by his Prophets, that he did not value their ceremonious Performances, without Holiness and Obedience to the Moral Law. *I spake not to your Fathers, saith he, nor commanded them in the Day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices; but this Thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my Voice, Jer. vii, 22.* Nay, so far was God from instituting the *Jewish Service* upon any other Design, than the making that People more Holy than the Heathen about them were, that whensoever it failed of having that desired Effect, he declares that he even abhorred all their Religious Exercises. *He that killeth an Ox, is as if he slew a Man; he that*
sacri-

sacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dog's Neck; he that offereth an Oblation, as if he offered Swines Blood; and he that burneth Incense, as if he blessed an Idol; yea they have chosen their own ways, and their Soul delighted in their Abominations, Isaiah lxvi,

3. And though the later Jews grew generally so superstitious in their observance of their Ceremonies, as thereby even to neglect the weightier Matters of the Law; yet those who considered Things more thoroughly, always maintained and taught zealously,* that it was not slaying a Multitude of Sacrifices, or bringing splendid Offerings, or even building and adorning the Temple of God with all the Cost and Beauty in the World, that could truly denominate a Man Religious; that it was a great Deceit for Men to think that God would be flatter'd and put off with outward Ceremonious Services, instead of Truth, Righteousness and Holiness of Mind; and that nothing could be more ridiculous, than for Men to be very careful not to enter into the Temple, which is built of Wood and Stone, without first washing and cleansing their Bodies: and yet not be afraid to appear before God in Prayer, with unclean and polluted Minds.

9. Lastly, That the only Design of God's Instituting the Christian Religion, was to make Men yet more Virtuous and more

* *Philo Judæus.*

more Holy ; is evident from the whole Tenour of the Gospel. The Design of our Saviour's *Life and Preaching*, was to give Men a Body of more spiritual and refined Laws ; to set them an Example of a more perfect and holy Life ; and to make a clearer Revelation of *the Wrath of God against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men*, Rom. i, 18. The Design of his *Death and Passion*, was to make an Expiation for Sins that are past ; and to make a fuller Discovery of the heinous Nature of Sin, which God would not pardon even upon true Repentance, without so great and sufficient a Satisfaction. And the Design of his *sending the Holy Spirit*, was to *purifie to himself a peculiar People, by teaching and enabling Men, that denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, they should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World*, Tit. ii, 12.

10. Accordingly we find the Apostles every where in their Epistles, plainly declaring and giving Men warning, that since they had now received a most full Revelation of the Will of God, and a most clear Discovery of the Rewards and Punishments of a future State ; if their *Virtue* did not become proportionable to their *Knowledge*, and they purified not themselves *from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii, 1 ;

it would be even worse for them, than if they had never known the *Way of Righteousness*, 2 Pet. ii, 21. *Be not deceived*, saith Saint Paul, *neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, &c.* i. e. no unrighteous Person, shall inherit the Kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi, 9; And again, *Let no Man deceive you with vain Words; For because of these Things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience*, Ephes. v, 6; And again, *Of which Things I tell you before, as I have also told you in Times past, that they who do such Things, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*, Gal. v, 21. And all those Metaphorical Expressions, such as the *New Man, the New Creature, the New Birth, Regeneration, Conversion*, and the like, by which the Apostles frequently represent Religion, do manifestly tend to this; that under the Gospel-dispensation, nothing will stand a Man in any stead, but an entire Reformation of Life and Manners; and that all other Things are *nothing*, except only the keeping the *Commandments of God*, 1 Cor. vii, 19.

11. How miserably then do those Men abuse this great Salvation, and turn the Grace of God into *Lasciviousness*; who imagine, that because Christ has *disannulled the Old Law*, which was appointed only for a Time, therefore we may be excused by our Christian Liberty

Liberty from obeying the eternal Commands of God; that because Christ has established for us a Covenant of Grace, therefore we need not be zealous to abound in good Works; that because Christ has redeemed us from the Punishment of Sin, by the Sacrifice of himself, therefore we need not be zealous to rescue ourselves from under the Power and Dominion of it; that because the Righteousness of Christ shall be available for us unto Justification, therefore there is no necessity we should have any of our own: In a Word, that because Christ has promised Salvation to those who believe the Gospel, therefore there is no necessity we should be solicitous to obey it.

12. Our Saviour *has indeed disanulled the Ceremonial Part of the Law, which was appointed only for a Time; but he has thereby more firmly established the Moral Part of the Law, which is of eternal and unchangeable Obligation.* And therefore as nothing could be more foolish than the Opinion of those *Judaizers*, who thought that Christ had not abrogated any part of the Law; so nothing can be more *impious* than the Opinion of these *Gentilizers*, who contend that he has destroyed it all. Our Saviour *has indeed purchased for us a Covenant of Grace; that is, a Covenant wherein Pardon is granted to past Sins upon Repentance; but the indispensable Condition of that Covenant is that we be for the future*
zealous

zealous of good Works, 2 Tim. i, 10. He has indeed brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel, and opened to us an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God, 2 Pet. i, 11; but 'tis not that any unrenewed Nature shall be admitted to have a Share in those pure and undefiled Rewards, but that those who have broken off their Sins by Repentance, and their Iniquities by shewing Mercy to the Poor, may through his Merits be restored to the Love and Favour of God. Our Saviour has indeed redeemed us from the Punishment of Sin by the Sacrifice of himself; but 'tis expressly upon Condition, that we rescue our selves from the Power and Dominion of it. In order to this, he has made a most clear Discovery of the Will of God to us, and enabled us to obey it according to that Discovery; he has taken off our Chains, and opened us a way to retreat out of the Bondage of Sin and Satan, into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God, Rom. viii, 21; he has paid the Price, and redeemed us out of Captivity. But if notwithstanding all this, we still continue in Sin, 'tis our own Fault and extreme Folly here, and will be our Condemnation and Misery hereafter. If notwithstanding all that Christ has done for us, we will yet sit still under the Power of Sin; we shall notwithstanding all that he has done and suffered for us,
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at last fall into the *Punishment* thereof. *The Righteousness of Christ is indeed so far available to those who sincerely desire to obey the Gospel, as that for his sake That imperfect Righteousness, by which they could not be justified according to the Law, shall be acceptable before God (through Faith in him) unto Justification.* But for one who uses no Endeavours to be righteous himself, to expect to be justified by the external Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ, is for a sick Man to expect to be made whole by the Imputation of another's Health; or for a miserable Man to be made happy, meerly by the Imputation of another Man's Felicity. Righteousness is not an outward imaginary Quality, but an inward and real Disposition of the Heart and Mind, which must shew forth it self in real and substantial Acts of Holiness and Piety. *Little Children, saith St. John, let no Man deceive you; He that doth Righteousness is Righteous,* 1 John iii, 7. Lastly, Our Saviour has indeed promised Salvation to those who Believe the Gospel; but 'tis most expressly upon this Condition, that they obey it also. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven,* Matt. v, 21. Without this Obedience, nothing in the World can stand a Man in any stead. His believing
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and professing the Truth of the Christian Faith, will avail him nothing. His continuing in the Communion of the Church of Christ, will profit him nothing. *If any Man seems to be Religious, and continueth in any one Sin, deceiving his own Heart, that Man's Religion is vain, Jam. i, 26.* For though he could speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, and had all Faith, so that he could remove Mountains, yet if he were not Holy in his Life and Conversation, it would profit him nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. Many will plead before our Saviour at the Day of Judgment, that they not only believed his Doctrine, but also have taught in his Name, and in his Name have cast out Devils, and in his Name done many wonderful Works, Luke xiii, 26 ; that is, have had the extraordinary Gift even of working Miracles ; and yet if they be workers of Iniquity, he will say unto them, *Depart from me, I know you not.*



C H A P. IV.

A Digression concerning the Doctrine of Faith and Works, delivered by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, and in that to the Galatians.

1. **T**H E R E is but one Thing, that I know of, that can with any Colour be urged against this Notion of true Religion which I have now laid down: And that is, the Doctrine of *Faith* and Works, delivered by St. *Paul* in his Epistle to the *Romans*, and in that to the *Galatians*. Which because it is a Doctrine of the greatest Importance, and liable to be misinterpreted to countenance the most pernicious Errors; I shall therefore in this *Chapter*, by way of Digression, endeavour to give a brief Account of the *Occasion* of his writing these two *Epistles*, and to explain the *Doctrines* delivered therein.

2. Before the coming of Christ, the *Jews*, we know, were the peculiar People of God, selected out of all the Nations of the Earth, to be the Standard of true Religion, and to be the People among whom God would chuse to place his Name. *To them were committed the Oracles of God*, Rom. iii, 2. *To them pertained the Adoption and the Glory,*
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and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises; whose are the Fathers, and out of whom, according to the Flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Rom. ix. 4, 5. That is: With them were intrusted the Revelations of the Will of God, the Law and the Prophecies. To them was granted the peculiar Honour and Privilege, that they should be accounted the Sons or People of God, and that they should be accordingly under the more peculiar Care and Protection of his Providence. Among them was the Ark and Temple of God, the *Schecinah* or Glorious Presence of the Divine Majesty; In *Judah* was God known, his Name was great in *Israel*: In *Salem* also was his Tabernacle, and his dwelling Place in *Sion*. With them God entered solemnly into Covenant, that he would be their God, and they should be his People; and confirmed this Covenant by the Sacramental Seal of Circumcision, and with Sprinkling of Blood. To them God himself prescribed a Law or Form of Worship in a wonderful and miraculous Manner; and their Polity also was of Divine Institution and Appointment: God shewed his Word unto *Jacob*, his Statutes and his Judgments unto *Israel*: He did not deal so with any other Nation, neither had the Heathen Knowledge of his Laws. Lastly, They

They were the Posterity of those Patriarchs, to whom God had so often promised and sworn by himself, that in their Seed should all the Nations of the Earth be blessed. And among *them* was born that Messiah, of whom so great Things had been prophesied, and who was therefore the Expectation of all the Ends of the Earth. These were the great and glorious Privileges, which by the peculiar Favour of God, the Nation of the *Jews* enjoyed before the Preaching of the Gospel: These were the Grounds upon which that People so highly valued themselves, above the rest of Mankind. And most justly might they have done so, with an humble and thankful Acknowledgment of the Mercy and Favour of God. But they looked upon these high Privileges, not as the free Gift of God, but as a Right and Propriety, to which they only had a just Claim, who could reckon their Descent from *Abraham* and the Patriarchs. All other Nations in the World they looked upon with the utmost Scorn and Contempt, as *Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel*, *Strangers to the Covenant of Promise*, and scarce worthy of the Protection of the Divine Providence. The Establishment of their Law and Ceremonies they imagined to be such, as was designed by God to continue for ever; and the Promises contained in the Law and the Prophets

phets they thought belonged so peculiarly to themselves, that they would not believe any other People could ever come to be partakers of them. When the Messiah himself should appear, they were perswaded that he was to establish an everlasting Kingdom over the *Jewish* Nation only, and so become indeed the Wonder and Amazement, but not the Salvation of the Gentiles. This Opinion was so firmly rooted among them in our Saviour's Time, that even those who believed in his Name, and were convinced that his Kingdom was not to be a Temporal but Spiritual Kingdom, did yet imagine that the *Jews* only were to be admitted to be Subjects of this his Spiritual Kingdom, and that the Gospel was not to be preached to the *Gentiles*. Till St. *Peter* having an express Command from Heaven not to count any Man common and unclean, as we read *Acts* x, went and preached the Gospel to *Cornelius* the Centurion; and his Preaching being seconded by the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the Gentile Converts, convinced them that *God was of a Truth no respecter of Persons*, but that he had unto the *Gentiles* also granted Repentance unto Life, *Acts* x, 34. The great Mystery of the receiving in of the *Gentiles* being thus discovered, and God having himself declared by such a remarkable Miracle that in every Na-
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tion be that feareth God and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him ; there immediately arose a Question, whether those who by being converted to Christianity were admitted into the Number of the Elect People of God, and thereby became partakers of all the Privileges which had hitherto been confined to the *Jewish* Nation, were not thereupon obliged to become Profelytes also to the *Jewish* Law. The converted *Jews*, who had not yet laid aside their old Prejudices, but retained an extream Fondness for their Ceremonial Law, contended earnestly, that it *was* necessary that the *Jewish* Religion should be continued together with the Christian ; *teaching the Brethren every where, and saying, except ye be circumcised after the Manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved*, Acts xv, 1. Upon this the Apostles and Elders which were gathered together at *Jerusalem*, held a Consultation ; Where St. *Peter* having delivered it as his Opinion, That since God himself had born witness to the *Gentiles* by giving them the Holy Ghost, it would be no better than tempting God, to put a Yoke upon Their Necks, which neither themselves nor their Fathers had been able to bear ; they immediately agreed to write unto them, that they did not think it necessary to lay upon them any such Burden ; as you may see at large, *Acts* xv. And now the Question being

ing decided by such an authoritative Sentence as this, *It seemed good unto the Holy Ghost, and to us the Apostles and Elders, &c.* one would have thought there should have been no more Debate about this Matter. But the restless *Jews*, moved with Envy that the *Gentiles* should be admitted into the Number of the elect People of God as well as themselves, persisted still in their Obstinacy, notwithstanding this positive Determination; perswading the *Gentile* Converts, that they *must needs observe the Law of Moses, and constraining them to be circumcised*. Insomuch that St. Paul, who as far as he could lawfully, conformed himself to the Humours of all Men, that he might by all means gain some, was forced to circumcise Timothy at Derbe, because of the *Jews* that were in those Quarters, Acts xvi, 3. Though at other Times, as being the Apostle to whom was especially committed the Preaching of the Gospel to the *Gentiles*, he always earnestly exhorted his *Gentile* Converts to stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ had made them free: And particularly his *Epistle* to the *Romans*, and that to the *Galatians*, were written upon this very occasion; as will be evident to any one, who shall impartially consider the Matter.

3. For, that there are abundance of Passages in these *Epistles*, which so evidently re-

late to this Controversie, that they cannot possibly be interpreted to any other Sense, is manifest from but cursorily reading the Epistles themselves. A great part of the *Epistle to the Romans*, is professedly about the casting off the *Jews*, and the coming in of the *Gentiles*; particularly the 9th, 10th, and 11th Chapters. And the 14th Chapter is wholly spent in shewing the unnecessariness of the *Jewish* Observation of Days, and distinction of Meats; *One Man esteemeth one Day above another, another esteemeth every Day alike*, verse 5; and *I know and am perswaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of it self, but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean*, verse 14, and so on. In the *Epistle to the Galatians*, the Apostle tells his Gentile Converts, that he was amazed they should so soon be drawn away from the Truth, by some that troubled them and would pervert the Gospel of Christ, chap. i, verse 7. He gives them warning, that the Reason why those Perversers of the Gospel perswaded them to Judaize, was only that they might make a fair Shew in the Flesh; *they constrain you, says he, to be circumcised, only least they should suffer Persecution for the Cross of Christ; For neither they themselves, who are circumcised, keep the Law, but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your Flesh*, chap. vi, verse 12, and 13. He

13. He assures them, that in *Jesus Christ* neither *Circumcision* availeth any thing, nor *uncircumcision*, but a new Creature, chap. vi, verse 15. He urges them earnestly to stand fast in their *Christian Liberty*, and not to be intangled again with the *Yoke of Bondage*; protesting that if any Man would be circumcised, *Christ* should profit him nothing, but he should become a *Debtor* to fulfil the whole Law, chap. v, verse 1. He tells them also how he openly rebuked *St. Peter* at *Antioch*, for withdrawing and separating himself from the *Gentiles*, for fear of them which were of the *Circumcision*, chap. ii, verse 12. All which, and many other the like Passages, do so evidently refer to that Controversie, *Whether the Jewish Religion was to be mixed with the Christian, or no*; that I know not whether any one ever attempted to interpret them to any other Sense.

4. And that those Other Parts also of these *Epistles*, which have by some been otherwise interpreted, ought indeed to be understood wholly to relate to the same Controversie, appears sufficiently from the *Apostle's* way of arguing. For according to any other Interpretation, the *Terms*, which the *Apostle* makes use of, are improper; and his *Reasoning* is hard, intricate, and not concluding: As is sufficiently evident from the Difficulty that some *Expositors* have met with, to vindicate *St. Paul* from thwarting

the main Design of the Gospel, from contradicting the exprefs Words of some other of the Apostles, and also from contradicting himself. But if these whole *Epistles* be understood to refer to that Question, *Whether the Christian Religion be alone sufficient to Salvation, or whether it be necessary to observe together with it the Ceremonies also of the Jewish Law*; the Terms, which the Apostle uses, are most apt and proper; and his Reasoning is most easie, strong, and conclusive: As will most evidently appear from a brief View of them both.

5. The Design then of the Apostle being on one Hand to *magnifie* the *Christian Religion*, by setting forth its *sufficiency* to Salvation; and on the other hand, to demonstrate the *insufficiency* and *unnecessariness* of the *ceremonial Observances of the Jewish Law*; the Terms which he all along makes use of to exprefs the *Christian* and *Jewish* Religion by, are such as may best serve to *set forth* the *Excellency* of the one, and *diminish* the Opinion which Men had taken up of the *Necessity* of the other. Thus because the first and most fundamental Duty of the Christian Religion, is *believing* in God, and *believing* That most perfect Revelation of his Will, which he has made to Mankind by our Saviour Jesus Christ; whereas on the contrary, the principal Part of the *Jewish* Religion, or at least of that Religion

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on which the Judaizing Christians so earnestly contended for, was an *anxious observance* of the burdensom Ceremonies of the Mosaic Law; therefore the Apostle calls the Christian Religion *Faith*, and the Jewish Religion *the Law*. Thus in the *Epistle to the Romans*, chap. iii, verse 28. *Therefore we conclude that a Man is justified by Faith, without the Deeds of the Law*; That is, it clearly appears from what has been already said, that Obedience to the *Christian Religion* is sufficient to justify a Man, without observing the Ceremonies of the *Jewish*. And verse 31. *Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid; yea we establish the Law*: That is, Do we then, as some Men object, by our preaching up the *Christian Religion*, make void the *Law of God*, or That *Revelation of his Will* which he made to the *Jews*? No, we are so far from that, that by introducing *Christianity* we establish, confirm, and perfect the moral and immutable part of the Law much more effectually, than the *Jewish Ceremonies* were able to do. Thus likewise in the *Epistle to the Galatians*, chap. iii, verse 2. *This only would I learn of you; Received ye the Spirit by the Works of the Law, or by the bearing of Faith?* Or, as 'tis expressed, verse 5, *He that ministrerth to you the Spirit, and worketh Miracles among you, doth he it by the Works of the*

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Law, or by the hearing of Faith ? that is, I appeal unto your selves, who contend so earnestly for the Necessity of keeping up the Jewish Ceremonies ; was it by your observing the Rites of the Jewish Religion that ye received the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, or by your being converted to the Christian ? So also verse 24. The Law was our School-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by Faith ; That is, the Jewish Dispensation was appointed by God in Condescension to the Weakness of that People, to fit them by degrees for the Reception of the Christian. And chap. ii, verse 15 ; the Apostle having rebuked St. Peter openly, for withdrawing himself from the Gentiles at Antioch, adds, We who are Jews by Nature, and not Sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a Man is not justified by the Works of the Law, but by the Faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that We might be justified by the Faith of Christ, and not by the Works of the Law ; That is, If we our selves who were brought up in the Jewish Religion, being convinced that That Religion was not able to justifie us in the sight of God, have thought fit to forsake it and embrace the Christian Religion, in hopes to be justified thereby ; how much less Reason have you to compel the Gentiles, who were never

never brought up in the *Jewish Religion*, to conform themselves to the Customs of the *Jews*, after their Conversion to *Christianity*?

6. Again, because the *Christian Religion* teaches us to expect Salvation not from our own Merits, but from the Grace of God ; that is, according to the Terms of that new and gracious Covenant, wherein God has promised to accept of Sincerity instead of perfect Obedience ; whereas on the contrary, the *Jews* depended upon their exact performance of the Works of the Law ; therefore the Apostle calls the *Christian Religion*, *Grace*, and the *Jewish Religion*, *Works*. Thus in the *Epistle to the Romans*, chap. xi, verse 5 ; So then at this present time also, there is a Remnant according to the Election of *Grace* ; That is, though the *Jewish Nation* having rejected the gracious Offer of the Gospel, are thereupon rejected from being the People of God ; yet has God reserved to himself a Remnant from among them, even those who have embraced the *Christian Religion*. And if by *Grace*, then is it no more of *Works* ; That is ; and if it be upon Account of their having embraced the *Christian Religion*, that they are reckoned the peculiar People of God ; then is not this Privilege any longer annexed to the Professors of the *Jewish Religion* : Otherwise

Grace is no more Grace ; that is, otherwise the Christian Religion is in vain, and not what it pretends to be, the Grace of God. Thus also, chap. vi, verse 14. Sin shall not have the Dominion over you, for ye are not under the Law but under Grace ; that is, ye are not under the Jewish Religion, but under the Christian. So likewise in the Epistle to the Galatians, chap. v. verse 4. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law, ye are fallen from Grace ; that is, whosoever will needs retain the Jewish Religion, he takes upon him to fulfil the whole Law, forsaking the gracious Dispensations of the Christian Religion ; and therefore Christ shall be of no effect unto him.

7. Again ; because the Duties of the Christian Religion are almost wholly *Moral and Spiritual*, respecting the inward Disposition of the Heart and Mind ; whereas on the contrary, the Ceremonies of the Jewish Law were for the most part external, and, as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* calls them, *Carnal Ordinances*, respecting chiefly the outward Purification of the Body ; therefore the Apostle calls the Christian Religion *Spirit*, and the Jewish Religion *Flesh*. Thus in the *Epistle to the Romans*, chap. viii, verses 3, and 4. *For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the Flesh, God sending his own Son in the Likeness of*
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sinful Flesh, and for Sin, condemned Sin in the Flesh, that the Righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the Flesh but after the Spirit; That is, whereas the Jewish Religion, because of its outward and Carnal Ordinances, was weak and insufficient to make Men truly Righteous; God sending his own Son in the Likeness of sinful Man, to offer up himself a Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind, established the Christian Religion, which purifying thoroughly the whole Heart and Mind, and purging the Conscience from dead Works, might through the Grace and Mercy of God avail to justify Men from all Things, from which they could not be justified by the Law. Thus also in the Epistle to the Galatians, chap. iii. verse 3. Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the Flesh? that is, Are ye so foolish as to think, that after ye have embraced the Truth of the Christian Religion, you can become yet more perfect by observing the Ceremonies of the Jewish Law?

8. These are the *Terms* which the Apostle expresses the Christian and Jewish Religion by, in these *Epistles*. And according to this Interpretation, the Substance of both these *Epistles* may clearly be resolved into certain Arguments, by which the Apostle plainly and strongly proves, against the Judaizing Believers, that Obedience to the

Christian Religion is sufficient to Salvation, without observing the Ceremonies of the Jewish.

9. His first Argument is this. The Jewish Religion having proved insufficient to make Men truly good, as *Natural Religion* had before done; there was a necessity of setting up another Institution of Religion, which might be more available and effectual to that End. Now the setting up a new Institution of Religion necessarily implying the abolishing of the Old, it follows that *Christianity* was not to be added to *Judaism*, but that *Judaism* was to be changed into *Christianity*; that is, that the Jewish Religion ceasing, the Christian was from thenceforward to succeed in its Room. This Argument the Apostle insists upon in the 1st, 2d, 5th, 6th and 7th Chapters to the *Romans*, and in the 1st and 4th Chapters to the *Galatians*. In the 1st and 2d Chapters of the *Epistle* to the *Romans*, he shews that the Jewish Religion had proved insufficient to make Men truly Holy, as *Natural Religion* had also done. In the 5th and 6th Chapters of that *Epistle* to the *Romans*, and in the 1st to the *Galatians*, he gives an Account of the Institution of the Christian Religion, as more available to that End. In the 7th Chapter to the *Romans*, he shews that this new Institution of Religion necessarily implies the abolishing

ing of the old one ; and this he does from the Similitude of a Woman's being bound by the Law to her Husband so long as she lives, but if her Husband be dead, she is free from the Law of her Husband ; which Similitude he applies, *ver. 4. Wherefore, my Brethren, ye also are become dead to the Law by the Body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the Dead, that we should bring forth Fruit unto God.* In the 4th Chapter to the Galatians, he proves the same Thing from the Similitude of a young Heir's being under Governours or Tutors, *verse 1. I say that the Heir, as long as he is a Child, differeth nothing from a Servant, though he be Lord of all ; but is under Tutors and Governours untill the Time appointed of the Father ; even so we when we were Children, were in Bondage under the Elements of the World. But when the fulness of Time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law, to redeem those that were under the Law, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons :* That is, The Jewish Law was an Institution of Religion adapted by God in great Condescension to the weak Apprehensions of that People ; but when the fulness of Time was come, God sent his Son Jesus Christ to institute a more perfect Form of Religion ; after the Settlement of which in the World, the former Dispensa-

tion was to be *disanulled*, for the *Weakness and Unprofitableness thereof*.

10. The second Argument, by which the Apostle proves that the Christian Religion is sufficient to justify a Man, without mixing therewith the Rites of the Jewish ; is this. The Sum and Essence of all Religion, is Obedience to the moral and eternal Law of God. Since therefore the Ceremonies of the Jewish Law were instituted only for that very reason, that they might promote this great End, and prepare Mens Hearts for the Reception of that more perfect Institution of Religion, wherein God was to be worshipped and obeyed in Spirit and in Truth ; 'tis manifest, that when this perfect Institution of Religion was settled, the former, which was designed for no other Reason but to be preparatory to this, must be abolished. This Argument the Apostle insists on in the 2d Chapter to the *Romans*, and in the 3d to the *Galatians*. In the 2d to the *Romans* he shows, that every Institution of Religion, and particularly the Jewish, was no otherwise of any Esteem in the sight of God, than as it promoted that great End of Obedience to his Moral and Eternal Law. *For Circumcision*, saith he, *verily profiteth, if thou keep the Law ; but if thou be a breaker of the Law, thy Circumcision is made Uncircumcision ; Therefore if the Uncircumcision keep the Righteous-*
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ness of the Law, shall not his Uncircumcision be counted for Circumcision? And shall not Uncircumcision, which is by Nature, if it keep the Law; judge thee who by the Letter and Circumcision dost transgress the Law? For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is That Circumcision which is outward in the Flesh; But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit and not in the Letter, whose Praise is not of Men but of God, verse 25, to the End. In the 3d to the Galatians he argues, that the Jewish Religion having been thus instituted, only to prepare Men for that Obedience to the Eternal Law of God, which was to be the Sum and Essence of the Christian Religion; it follows, that when this latter and more perfect Institution took place, there was no need of continuing the former. The Law, saith he, was added because of Transgressions, till the Seed should come, to whom the Promise was made, v. 19: And verse 23. Before Faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the Faith which should afterward be revealed; Wherefore the Law was our School-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by Faith; But after that Faith is come, we are no longer under a School-master.

II. The Third Argument, which the Apostle makes use of, to prove that those who were converted to the Christian Religion,

gion, were not bound any longer to observe the *Jewish*; is this. The Religion of *Abraham* was such a Religion, as was acceptable to God, and available to Justification: But now the Religion of *Abraham* was the same with the *Christian* Religion, consisting only of *Faith* and *Obedience* without the *Works of the Jewish Law*; (For the Scripture saith expressly, that *the Gospel was preached before unto Abraham*, and that *his Faith was reckoned unto him for Righteousness, when he was not in Circumcision, but in Uncircumcision*;) It follows therefore, that the *Faith* and *Obedience* of the *Christian* Religion shall be imputed unto us for Righteousness, without the *Works of the Jewish Law*. This Argument the Apostle largely and strongly insists upon, in the whole 4th Chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*, and in the 3d to the *Galatians*: As you may there read at large.

12. The Fourth and Last Argument, by which the Apostle proves that the *Christian* Religion is sufficient to Salvation, without retaining the *Jewish*; is this. The Posterity of *Abraham* were the Elect and the peculiar People of God: But by the Posterity of *Abraham* is not meant strictly those who descend from *Abraham according to the Flesh*, but *the Children of the Promise*, (that is, as many as are of the *Faith of Abraham*;) shall be counted for the Seed. The true Religion therefore and Service of God, is not confined

confined to the *Jewish* Nation, who are the Posterity of *Abraham* according to the *Flesh*; but the *Gentiles* also which believe, have attained to *Righteousness*, even the *Righteousness which is of Faith*; That is, those of all Nations, as well *Gentiles* as *Jews*, who embrace the *Christian* Religion, which is the same with the Religion of *Abraham*, shall be justified with faithful *Abraham*. And this Argument the Apostle insists upon, in the 9th, 10th, and 11th Chapters of the Epistle to the *Romans*, and in the 4th to the *Galatians*.

13. This is the Sum of the Arguments, which the Apostle makes use of in these two Epistles, to prove against the *Judaizing Christians*, that there was no necessity of retaining the *Jewish* Religion together with the *Christian*. And from the largeness, clearness, and strength of these Arguments, 'tis evident that the Determination of this Question, is *indeed* the principal Scope and Design of the Apostle in these Epistles. For nothing can be more absurd than to suppose, that the Apostle should most strongly and largely demonstrate a Thing, which was not really the Design of his Discourse; or that, on the other hand, he should make a Thing the professed Subject of his Discourse, and yet prove it by such intricate and obscure Arguments, as the wisest and most learned Men should never

ver be able to reconcile, either with the rest of the Scripture, or with themselves.

14. We must not therefore so understand any Passages in these Epistles, as if the Apostle designed to magnifie *one* Christian Virtue in opposition to *all* or *any* of the rest ; but only that he would set forth the Perfection of the Virtues of the *Christian* Religion, without the Ceremonies of the *Jewish*. Thus when he tells us, that we are *justified by Faith without Works* ; we must not interpret it of the *Faith* of the *Christian* Religion, in opposition to the *Works* of the *Christian* Religion ; but of the *Faith* of the *Christian* Religion, in opposition to the *Works* of the *Jewish*. For so the Apostle himself most expressly explains it, Gal. v, 6 ; *In Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but Faith which worketh by Love*. That is, it matters not whether a Man observes the *Works* of the *Jewish* Religion or no, if he maintains but the *Faith* and *Obedience* of the *Christian*. But as to the *Works* of the *Christian* Religion, the same Apostle every where urgeth *their* Necessity ; and particularly the *five* last Chapters of the Epistle to the *Romans*, are a most earnest Exhortation to be fruitful therein.

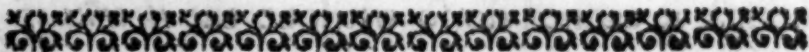
15. From which it follows most evidently, that there is no Contradiction between St Paul and St James, when the one says
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that a Man is justified by Faith without Works, and the other faith that Faith without Works cannot justify. For the one speaking professedly of the Works of the Jewish Religion, and the other of the Works of the Christian, 'tis plain that the Faith of the Christian Religion may avail to justify a Man without the Works of the Jewish Religion, (which is the Assertion of St Paul;) though it cannot do so without the Works of the Christian Religion, (which is the Assertion of St James.) The Faith of Abraham, faith St Paul, was accounted to him for Righteousness: That is, his Faith was accepted without Circumcision, and without observing the external Rites of the Law. But it was by Works, faith St James, that Abraham our Father was justified; That is, it was by real Obedience to the moral and eternal Law of God, such as is now required by the Christian Religion, that his Faith was made available to Justification. So that there is no other difference between these two great Apostles, than as if a Man should say, That believing the Christian Religion is sufficient to Salvation, without obeying the Jewish Religion; but that it cannot be so without obeying the Christian.

16. From all which 'tis plain, that the Doctrine of St Paul concerning Faith and Works, delivered in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, is so far from contradicting

dicting what I have laid down in the foregoing Chapter, concerning the true Notion of Religion in general, (namely, that *the Essence and End of all true Religion is Obedience to the Moral and Eternal Law of God*;) that on the contrary nothing does more clearly and more strongly confirm it.



CHAP. V.

Of the Duties of Religion in particular.

1. **T**Hirdly, Endeavour to gain a clear and distinct Knowledge of the particular Duties of Religion. 'Tis not sufficient to understand in general wherein True Religion consists, and to have right Notions concerning its Obligations in general; but we must also consider the Particulars of our Duty, and view them distinctly under some proper Heads. Many there are, who have right and true Notions concerning the Nature of Religion in general, who understand well enough and are convinced that the only Thing that can be accepted in the sight of God, is Holiness of Life, and Universal Obedience to all his Commands; who yet contenting themselves with

with this slight, general, and superficial Knowledge, and never giving themselves Time to meditate seriously on the several particular Branches of their Duty, are very apt to impose upon themselves with a partial Obedience; and while they satisfy their own Minds with some loose and general Considerations, that *their Lives are Religious in the main, that they have a general Esteem for Virtue and Religion, and that they hate Prophaneness and professed Irreligion,* they make a shift to live in the habitual Practice of some great Sin, or in the constant neglect of some important Duty.

2. My Design is not in this short Essay, to make a large and particular Deduction of all the several Branches of our Christian Duty. This has already been fully and excellently done by some of our own Writers. I shall only lay down the chief Particulars of our Duty under some brief Heads, which may be easily remembered and carried constantly in Mind, as perpetual *Memorials* of what upon all Occasions we must remember our selves to be absolutely and indispensably obliged to. And they shall be these Three.

3. First, *That we ought to be always devout towards God, with the profoundest Veneration of Mind possible, and to seek all Opportunities of expressing that Devotion.* By this Rule is commanded Faith in God,
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Trust and Dependance upon him, Submission and Resignedness to his Will, Fear and Love of him, Zeal for his Honour, Prayer and Thankfulness to him, and a conscientious Attendance upon his Worship and Ordinances. And by it, is forbidden, Blasphemy and Prophaneness, Superstition and Idolatry, Witchcraft and Consulting with such as are reputed to have Skill in any evil Art, Perjury and vain Swearing, Unbelief and Distrust of God, want of Zeal for his Honour, Unthankfulness and Neglect of Prayer, Carelessness in Religion, and neglecting to attend upon the Publick Worship.

4. Secondly, *That we ought constantly to endeavour in the whole Course of our Lives, to promote the Good and the Happiness of all Men.* By this Rule is commanded Honour and Reverence, Fidelity and Obedience towards those who are our Superiours; Goodness and Kindness, Affability and Courteousness, Justice and Honesty, Gentleness and Candour, Meekness and Peaceableness, Forgiveness of Injuries, and a Desire of doing all possible Kindnesses to those who are our Equals; Pity and Succour, Mercifulness and Compassion, Alms and Beneficence, Instruction and Assistance, and all manner of Help and Encouragement to those who are our Inferiours. And by it is forbidden Disobedience and Rebellion,

lion, Traiterousness and speaking Evil of Dignities ; Murder and Stealing, Extortion and Fraud, Perfidiousness and Lying, Oppression and Over-reaching, Calumny and Evil-speaking, Hatred and Revenge, Sourness and Unkindness, Anger and Passion, Peevishness and Ill-nature, Sullenness and Moroseness, Discord and Unpeaceableness, Cruelty and Uncharitableness, Pride and Haughtiness, and Unconcernedness at the Wants and Miseries of Others.

5. *Thirdly, That we ought to be Temperate and Abstemious in the Use of all Temporal Enjoyments, as Disciples of Christ, and Candidates for Heaven ; as those who look for their Portion, not in the Pleasures of this World, but in the Happiness of the Other.* By this Rule is commanded Temperance and Sobriety, Chastity and Purity, Contentment and Contempt of the World, Patience and Watchfulness, Mortification and Self-denial, Heavenly-mindedness and Humility. And by it is forbidden, Gluttony and Drunkenness, Adultery and Fornication, Uncleaness and Lasciviousness, Voluptuousness and Sensuality, Covetousness and Ambition, Idleness and Softness, Impatience and Discontent.

6. This is the Sum of the Duties, which every one who will in earnest dedicate himself to the Service of God, and seriously enter upon a Religious Course of Life, *must resolve*

resolve to perform. Whoever will *bear his Cross*, and come after Christ, must first consider, whether for the sake of *God and Religion*, he can be able to bear the Scorn and Contempt of Impious and Prophane Men, and suffer all Things rather than be compelled to do any Thing to the Dishonour of God. He must consider, whether for the sake of *Justice and Charity*, he can be able to sacrifice his dearest Interests, to conquer his most natural Passions, and to despise the Glory and Splendor of the World. And he must ask himself, whether for the sake of *Temperance and Purity*, he can be able to mortifie his most darling Lusts, and, as a resolute Follower of a Crucified Saviour, condemn all the sinful Pleasures of Flesh and Sense. For unless he can peremptorily resolve with himself to do all this, his Profession of Religion will certainly be in vain, and he cannot be a Disciple of Christ. Which of you, saith our blessed Saviour, *intending to build a Tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the Cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply after he has laid the Foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it, begin to mock him, saying, This Man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what King going to make War against another King, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten Thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with*
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twenty Thousand? So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath; that is, who does not resolve with himself to perform his Duty, whatever it may cost him; he cannot be my Disciple, Luke xiv, 28, &c.



C H A P. VI.

What is to be done at Confirmation: Of solemnly renewing the Baptismal Vow.

I. **W**HEN a Person is thus arrived to a firm Belief of the great Truths of Religion: When he understands distinctly the Extent and Obligation of his Duty; and is come to a settled Resolution, of conducting the whole Course of his Life according to that Knowledge; then is it that he becomes truly meet for the Kingdom of God, and is rightly prepared to make a solemn Profession of his being a Disciple of Christ. Which the Church has wisely ordained should be done publickly at Confirmation. Where by Ratifying with our own Mouth the Vow made in our Name by our Sureties, we solemnly take upon our selves to perform all the Duties, which the Condition of our Baptismal Covenant obliges us to observe; and by Imposition of Hands (according to the constant

stant practice of the Church since the Times of the Apostles,) we have sealed and confirmed to us all the *Privileges, which the Condition of the same Baptismal Covenant intitles us to receive.*

2. *First, therefore, At receiving Confirmation, consider that you now solemnly undertake for your self to perform all the Duties, which the Condition of your Baptismal Covenant obliges you to observe.* Consider that you now confirm and ratifie, all that your Sureties promised and vowed for you at your Baptism. Consider that you now engage in your own Person, *to renounce the Devil and all his Works, the Poms and Vanities of this wicked World, and all the sinful Lusts of the Flesh :* That you now engage to stand firm in the *Belief of the Christian Doctrine, and never to be ashamed to confess the Faith of Christ crucified, or afraid to own your self his Disciple :* And that you now engage to obey from henceforward all the *Commandments of God, that is, to live (with all the Strictness and Purity of the Gospel) in the constant Practice of every one of those Duties, of which I have briefly set down the Heads in the former Chapter.*

3. And consider, that you promise all this most solemnly, *in the Presence of God, and before the whole Congregation.* Consider, that you enter into this Promise with *such Solemnity, as lays upon you the strongest possible*

possible Obligations to Virtue. Consider, that you *so* enter into this Promise with *Knowledge and Deliberation*, that if you shall afterwards fall into any Course of Sin, in contempt of such repeated Obligations to the contrary ; the Guilt thereof will be extremely increased. And that therefore you ought *now* to affect your Mind *deeply* with a Sense of the Heinousness of Sin, and to strengthen *greatly* your good Resolutions. Anciently, every one that was baptized, was taught to look upon himself as entering into so solemn an Obligation of Religion, that if after *that Great and Sacred Vow* he should fall into any wilful and known Sin, it could not be forgiven him but upon a proportionably *great and long Repentance*. And the same Reason there is now, why every one that by Confirmation dedicates himself to the Service of God, and makes publick Profession of his being a Disciple of Christ, should look upon himself as entering into such a solemn Obligation, as should make him exceeding fearful of falling for the future into any great Sin, the Guilt of which will be extremely increased by being committed after such repeated Vows and Promises to the contrary.

4. Yet this is no Reason why any one should defer being *Confirmed* ; as if by omitting to bind himself by this New and Solemn Promise, he might continue to sin

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with less Guilt and less Danger. For though the guilt of Sin be indeed much increased, by being committed after repeated Obligations to the contrary ; yet if any one omits to renew his Obligations, only for that reason, that he may continue in Sin ; his Sin is then equally heinous, and against Knowledge, as if he had renewed his Obligation. *Baptism* is a solemn Obligation to be Religious ; And many of the Antients, because they thought Sin would be more heinous after so solemn an Obligation, did therefore defer to be baptized till the End of their Lives. *The Lord's Supper* is also a solemn Obligation to be religious : And many in our Days, because they think Sin will be more heinous after so solemn an Obligation, do therefore defer the receiving the Communion all their Lives. But 'tis plain these Men run into a very great Error. For, the Reason why Sin after repeated Obligations to the contrary, becomes more heinous, is because it is committed with greater *Deliberation*, and against clearer *Convictions*. When therefore a Man who believes Religion, and *understands* its Obligations, omits these Duties for no other Reason, but that he may sin (as he thinks) with less danger ; his Sins are then equally *deliberate*, and against equally *clear Knowledge* ; and he moreover adds to them
a con-

a contemptuous Neglect of the Means of becoming more religious.



CHAP. VII.

Of the Certainty of God's Grace, and the Assistance of his Holy Spirit.

I. **S**Econdly, Consider that you come now to have sealed and confirmed to you all the Privileges, which the Condition of your Baptismal Covenant intitles you to receive. At Baptism we are admitted into the Church of God, and have a Title to the Graces and Assistance of the Holy Spirit; and at Confirmation this Grace is sealed and assured to us, by the external Sign of Imposition of Hands. When therefore you come in this solemn manner to make Profession of your Religion, and to dedicate your self to the Service of God; be sure to come with earnest Desires, and a longing Soul; with a firm Faith, and a well-assured Hope; with a pure Heart, and a Mind prepared for the Reception of the Holy Ghost; And God will not fail to pour down upon you the abundance of his Grace; to give you Strength from thenceforward to overcome both the in-

ward Corruption of your Nature, and the outward Temptations of the World and the Devil; to inable you to continue firm in the Faith of Christ, and in the Obedience of his Commands; to preserve you always from the Dominion of Sin, and to bring you safe unto his Kingdom of Glory.

2. There is nothing more pernicious to the Souls of Men, than an Opinion of the *Uncertainty of the Grace of God*, and its not being annexed constantly to the Use of Means. If we imagine that our *Nature is so utterly corrupted*, that we can no more *do or will* any thing that is good, than a dead Body can move, or bring it self to Life, 'till we be acted by such a mighty and extraordinary Grace of God, as nothing *that we can do* can in the least prepare us to receive; If we imagine that the *Temptations of the World and the Devil* are so strong, that we cannot possibly overcome them without such a powerful Assistance of the Holy Spirit, as God has not annexed to the Use of any *Ordinances or Means* of Religion; If we imagine that the *Commandments of God* are so *impossible* to be kept, that after all we can do, we must sit still in Expectation of being *converted* suddenly by an *irresistible Grace*: This must needs make all our *Endeavours weak and faint, dead and without Heart*; and we shall certainly never be able to

to overcome our Temptations and to Persevere in Well-doing.

3. It must indeed be confessed, that the Corruption of our Nature is really so great, that we cannot do any thing as of our selves, 2 Cor. ix, 5. It must be confessed, that the Temptations of the World and the Devil are really so strong, that we can never, meerly by our own Strength, be able to stand and persevere unto the End. It must be confessed, that the Commandment of God is so exceeding broad, that by all that we can do by our own Power, we can never be justified in the sight of God. But then if our Saviour has delivered us from this Corruption of our Nature, and has broken all the Powers of Sin and Satan: If Christ by his Death has purchased this Grace for us, that upon our attending the Ordinances and Means of Religion which he hath appointed, God will as certainly bestow upon us the sufficient Assistance of his Holy Spirit, as a tender Father cannot deny his Child any reasonable Request: If God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will, with the Temptation, also make a Way to escape, 1 Cor. x, 13; and whenever he requires more of us than we are naturally able to perform, will certainly afford us an extraordinary Assistance, proportionable to the Difficulty we are obliged to encounter; (as he constantly did to the Primitive

Christians, who through the mighty Power of the Spirit were enabled to bear all the most exquisite Torments, that either *the Wit of Man*, or the *Malice of the Devil* could invent, with less Concern than we can even endure to hear or read of them :) If all this, I say, be true ; 'tis evident, that if, notwithstanding this, we still continue in Wickedness, all these specious Pretences will by no means excuse us, but we shall be found to have *done despite unto the Spirit of Grace*, and to have *neglected our great Salvation*.

4. Think not therefore that the Corruption of your Nature is greater, than That Grace and Assistance which God *now* affords you. For so you may sit still under the Dominion of Sin, in a vain Expectation of being converted by some sudden and All-powerful Grace of God ; 'till you be surprized by the *Revelation of his Righteous Judgment*. But know, that to all those who are *Baptized in his Name*, and who *Profess and Endeavour to obey his Commandments*, God *doth give both to will and to do of his good Pleasure* ; and therefore you are from henceforward indispensably bound, to *work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. ii, 12. Think not that the Temptations of the World and the Devil, are more powerful than that Strength wherewith God *now* indues you ; For so you will be sure to be overcome by them.

But

But know, that our Saviour has *Overcome the World and the Devil*, so that they have no more Power over the Servants of God; and therefore *We* are bound to overcome them also, and to be *more than Conquerors through him that loved us*, Rom. viii, 37. Think not that the Commandments of God are hard and impossible to be kept; For so you will certainly not be able to keep them. But know, that thro' Christ who *now* strengthens you, you may make them easie, and light, and pleasant; and therefore you are from henceforward indispensably obliged to keep them.

5. These are the Qualifications, with which a Person ought to come to *Confirmation*, that he may receive it with Advantage and Profit. I shall now give some brief Directions, how one that *has* thus solemnly entred into the Profession of Religion, may continue to live worthy of that Holy Profession.



C H A P. VIII.

*What is to be done after Confirmation.
Of Perseverance; and of the Danger
of Apostacy.*

1. **A**ND First. *Perfwade your self of the Necessity of Persevering in the constant Practice of Religion and Virtue, from this Period. The Primitive Christians thought themselves absolutely obliged, to live in the constant Practice of all Holiness and Virtue, from the Time of their Baptism to their Death. And if We have taken upon our selves the same Baptismal Vow; if We have entred into the same Profession of Religion; We ought also from that time forward to have the same Apprehensions. Think not that the making a Publick and Solemn Profession of Religion will be of any Advantage to you, unless the following Part of your Life be suitable to and worthy of that Profession. Think not that your present Zeal and Warmth of Devotion will stand you in any stead, unless it work in you such a lasting Disposition of Mind, as will afterwards, when Temptation and Trial shall succeed, preserve you stedfast and unmoveable in the Performance of your Duty.*

2. The

2. The Christian Life is a Spiritual Warfare, wherein we must fight *against* the Temptations of *this* World, for the Glories of *the other* ; and the Reward is promised, not to him that shall *fight*, but to him that shall *overcome*. We are told, that many should embrace the Doctrine of Christ, and receive his *Word* even with Joy ; but because in Time of Temptation they would fall away, it should profit them nothing to have once been Believers. This whole Life is a State of Tryal and Probation ; and however painfully we have laboured, yet if we leave off before our Work be done, we must lose our Reward. *They that run in a Race*, 1 Cor. ix, 24. saith the Apostle, *run all* ; but 'tis not they that *run*, but they that *continue* to run without fainting to the End, that shall obtain the Crown. Men are exceeding apt to deceive themselves with an Imagination, that some warm fits of Devotion ; the doing now and then a Work of Charity ; and the abstaining from Sin for some time, when perhaps the Temptation is less violent than ordinary, will be looked upon as the running the Christian Race. But let no Man deceive himself with vain Imaginations. This is indeed *running*, but not so as to *obtain* ; This is indeed *fighting*, but not so as to *conquer*, but to *be overcome*. 'Tis not the *struggling* with Sin, or the *interrupting* a wicked Life

by some short-lived Repentance, that will intitle us to a Crown of Righteousness; but we *must overcome*, and we must *evidence* our Victory by a steady Course of Piety, or our Labour will prove to be in vain.

3. Many there are, who upon some affecting Discourse, or some remarkable Providence, or some occasional Warmth of Devotion, do please themselves with good Resolutions, do admire the Pleasures of Virtue, and with a transporting Glimpse of the Joys of Holiness, do imagine themselves almost at the Gates of Heaven; and yet, when the Fit is over, the Cares of this World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches, and the Lusts of other Things returning upon them, choak the Word, and it becometh unfruitful; and all their pious Intervals serve to no other Purpose, but to make their Misery so much the more lamentable and deplorable, by how much they have come nearer to the Kingdom of God, and have been *almost* upon the Point of making themselves Happy. What Pity is it, that they who have had a *Taste of the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come*, should for want of being able to withstand the Allurements of some trifling Pleasure, or for want of Resolution to encounter some short and temporal Hardship, forfeit all their glorious Hopes of Happiness, and lose the Crown of Immortality!

Yet

Yet that they *must* do so if their Love wax cold, and they be offended at the Appearance of any Temptation, the Scripture every where most expressly assures us.

4. *He that endureth to the End*, saith our Blessed Saviour, *the same shall be saved*, Matth. xxiv, 13 : *But if any one draw back, my Soul shall have no pleasure in him*, Heb. x, 38. For no Man having put his Hand to the Plough, and looking back, is meet for the Kingdom of God, Luke ix, 62. Not every one that saith unto him, Lord, Lord ; ~~not~~ every one that embraces his Religion, and makes Profession of it ; nay, ~~not~~ every one that receiveth his Word with Gladness, and obeys it for a Time, even with Sincerity ; but he that with an unwearied Constancy maintains his Resolutions, and in the midst of all Temptations preserves his Integrity to the End ; *he* only has a certain Title to our Saviour's Promise.

5. And to the same Purpose the Apostle St. Paul, Rom. ii, 7, assures the Promise of Eternal Life, *not* to those who shall begin to do well, or to those who shall by fits, and at certain times, do some Works of Righteousness ; but to *those* only, who shall persevere in a steady Course of Piety ; to *them* who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory and Honour, and Immortality. And again, Heb. iii, 14 ; he tells us that we are made Partakers of Christ, if we

bold the Beginning of our Confidence stedfast unto the End. The Hebrews, to whom this Epistle was written, were certainly sincere Christians; they had been enlightened by *Baptism and the preaching of the Word*; they had *tasted of the Heavenly Gift*, and been *made Partakers of the Holy Ghost*; they had *tasted the good Word of God*, and the *Powers of the World to come*: And yet the Apostle tells them, that all this would not make them *Partakers of Christ*, i. e. would not intitle them to the Promises which the Gospel makes to Obedience, unless they persevered in this State to the End. Nay, so far would all these glorious Things be from ascertaining them of Happiness, that, if they fell away, the having formerly been Partakers of so great Privileges would but increase their Condemnation, and make their State more desperate.

6. Terrible are the Threatnings which the Scripture makes to those, who having known their Duty and begun to obey it, shall again return to a course of Wickedness. *If after they have escaped the Pollutions of the World through the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they shall be again intangled therein and overcome, the latter End is worse with them than the Beginning: For it had been better for them not to have known the way of Righteousness, than*
after

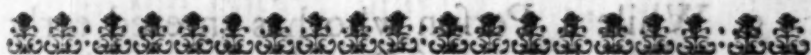
after they have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto them, 2 Pet. ii, 20. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this; how that the Lord having saved the People out of the Land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not. And the Angels which kept not their first Estate, but left their own Habitation, be hath reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness, unto the Judgment of the great Day, Jude 5, 6. Lest there be any Fornicator or prophane Person, as Esau, who for one Morsel of Meat sold his Birth-right; for ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected; for he found no Place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears, Heb. xii, 16. If we sin wilfully after we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversary, Heb. x, 26. It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto Repentance; seeing they crucifie to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame, Heb. vi, 4. The Meaning of all which Places, is plainly this; not indeed

deed that 'tis impossible to obtain Forgiveness, but that there is no more *Baptism*, no more *Baptismal Remission*; and that therefore if Men, after the clear Knowledge of their Duty, relapse any more into a state of gross Wickedness, they cannot be forgiven but upon such a *great and active Repentance*, as 'tis exceeding difficult to renew such Persons unto.

7. For this Reason our Saviour warns us to *watch*, and to be *ready always*; to have our *Loins girded about* and our *Lights burning*, and to be like Men that wait for their Lord when he shall return from the *Wedding*; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately, *Luke xii, 35.* And again, *Take heed to your selves, lest at any time your Hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting, and Drunkenness, and the Cares of this Life, and so that Day come upon you unawares; for as a Snare shall it come on all them that dwell upon the Face of the whole Earth: Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these Things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man, Luke xxi, 34.* And the Apostles also in their Epistles, are perpetually warning us to *watch* and to be *solicitous*, to take great heed (as of a Thing of most extreme Danger) lest at any time we fail of the Grace of God; and lest any Root of Bitterness

Bitterness springing up trouble us, and thereby we be defiled.

8. And indeed the ancient Church thought they could never carry this Point too far. To the *Converts* who had newly entered into the Profession of Religion, they always urged the Necessity of *Perseverance*, with the utmost Rigour. And those Texts of Scripture, which seem the most severely to threaten *Apostates*, that is, such as after their embracing the Truth of the Gospel, wilfully relapsed into the Practice of any notorious Wickedness, they always interpreted to them in the most strict Sense, that by those Terrors of the Lord they might preserve them (if possible) in their *Innocence*; though those who had already sinned, they treated more mildly, that they might incourage *Repentance* and prevent *Despair*.



CHAP. IX.

Of Innocence and an early Piety.

1. **S**ECONDLY, Consider the inestimable Advantage of *Innocence* and of an early *Piety*. *Innocence* is a Jewel which no Man understands the value of, and no Man knows

knows what he does when he first parts with it. When a Man is first driven from his good Resolutions, and seduced by the Temptations of Sin and Folly, he is then beaten from his best *strong Hold* ; his *Strength*, his *Courage*, his *Assistance* is diminished ; and *when* or *how far* he shall be able to recover them, he cannot tell. When a Man is first inticed to sin wilfully and against Knowledge, he makes Shipwreck of a good *Conscience*, and parts with that *Peace of Mind*, which how far he shall ever be able to recover, he cannot know. When a Man is first vanquished by the Enemies of his Salvation, the World, the Flesh, or the Devil ; and prefers any Pleasure, or any Interest, to his Duty ; he then forfeits his Title to the *Crown* promised to those who shall *overcome* ; and how far his Endeavours will afterwards be accepted, he cannot tell.

2. While a Person who has entered early into the Profession of Religion, is yet innocent and uncorrupted with Vice ; he begins his Christian Warfare with *firm and unbroken Resolutions*, with a *free and undistracted Mind*, and with the *certain Assistance of God's Holy Spirit*. But when once he has forfeited this happy Innocence, and is fallen from his first Love ; his *Zeal for Virtue* grows less *strict*, and his *Hatred against Vice* less *severe* ; his *Resolutions* be-
come

come weaker and more inconstant, his Passions stronger, and his Mind more unsettled; and the Grace of God is proportionably withdrawn from him; so that it becomes much more difficult to recover his first State, than it had been to preserve it. Think not therefore, when first Temptations offer themselves, that you can now yield to them, and afterwards return to your Duty: (For if your Resolutions, when firmest, are not able to resist, much less will they do it when they have once been broken; if you can't withstand the Temptations of Vice while it is yet at a distance, much less will you be able to do it when it has interested your Passions, and insinuated it self into your Affections; if you cannot maintain your Ground while the Spirit of God is ready constantly to assist you, much less will you do it when he has withdrawn himself from you :) But resolve bravely now, while it is called to Day, while you have Time and may do it with the greatest Advantages, to make your Religion easie, and your Happiness secure. Set out with a strong Resolution in the Christian Race, and press forward towards the Mark of the Prize of the high Calling: Despise all the Temptations of the World and the Flesh; and resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.

3. Again :

3. Again: While one who has early entered into the Profession of Religion, maintains his Integrity, and stands firm against all the Temptations of Sin and Satan; he carries with him not only a *quiet Conscience* and an *undisturbed Mind*, but such a full *Assurance and Joy in the Holy Ghost*, as inables him to perform his Duty not only *willingly* but *cheerfully*, and to despise all the Temptations of this present World as *Vanity and Nothing*. But when once he has made Shipwrack of a good Conscience, and is overcome by the Temptations of the World and the Devil, to sin in any gross and notorious Instances; then *Fears* and *Doubts*, *Anxieties* and *Scruples*, must be his portion. And though by Repentance he may recover a *well-grounded Hope*, and, through the Mercy of God, a *certain Expectation* of Pardon; yet not easily the *Assurance and Joy* of Innocence. Think not therefore, when you are tempted by Sin, that you may *now* yield to its Sollicitations, and *afterwards* by Repentance recover your first peace and quiet of Conscience: (For when once the Support of a good Conscience is lost, *Obedience* will be much more difficult; and *Peace* will not return, but after much *Labour* and many *Fears*, after great *Sorrow* and long *Doubts*;) But *resolve Now* to resist the *very first* Motions of Sin; and *be convinced* there is no *Pleasure* but in a good

good Conscience, nor any Joy but in the Obedience of God's Commands.

4. Lastly, While one who has entred betimes into the Profession of Religion, continues resolutely to preserve his Innocence, and conquers all the Temptations of Sin; he has a certain Title to that *exceeding weight of Glory*, that *Crown of Righteousness*, which God has laid up for those who shall keep the Faith and patiently continue in well-doing: But when once he turns from the holy Commandment delivered unto him, and is overcome by the Inticements and Allurements of Sin, he forfeits his Title to that Crown of Glory; and to what degree his after-endeavours will restore him, he cannot tell. That Repentance will procure him Mercy and Pardon, is certain; but to recover the Reward and the Crown of Innocence, it must be very early and very effectual. All that a late Penitent can hope for, is to obtain Forgiveness and be admitted to Heaven. The bright Crowns will be reserved for those, who have fought the good Fight and overcome the World. Think not therefore when you are assaulted by Temptation, that you may now enjoy the Pleasure of Sin, and afterward by Repentance attain to the Reward of Virtue also: (For though God hath indeed promised that those who are hired into the Vineyard at the Eleventh Hour, that is, who are late instructed in the Religion

Religion of Christ or in the *Knowledge of their Duty*, shall have the same Reward with those who have *born the Burden and Heat of the Day*: yet he has no where promised that those who stand idle in the Vineyard 'till the eleventh Hour; that is, who notwithstanding they *believe the Gospel* and *know their Duty*, yet defer their Repentance to the last, shall receive likewise the same Reward;) But resolve Now, as a faithful Soldier of Christ, to resist resolutely the Temptations of the *Devil*, to despise the Glory and Vanity of the *World*, to get above the Pleasures and Deceits of *Sense*; and then *your Labour* will be sure not to be in *vain in the Lord*.

5. 'Tis to those who *thus* overcome, that those great and glorious Promises in the *New Testament* are made: *Rev. xxi, 7. He that overcometh, shall inherit all Things*; and *Rev. iii, 21. To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my Throne*; even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his Throne: And the like. *He that overcometh*; that is, He that having embraced the Gospel of Christ, and being firmly perswaded of the Truth of his Religion, continues stedfast in this *Faith* and in the *Obedience* thereof, in spite of all the Temptations of Sin and Satan to the contrary. In the Primitive Times, the great Temptation with which Christians were assaulted,

faulted, was Persecution ; by which they were tempted to deny their Saviour, and to renounce that Faith which they had once embraced ; by returning again to the idolatrous Worship of the Heathen Gods. This was their peculiar Conflict and Trial. And he that in that great Trial resisted unto Blood ; chusing rather to endure the most exquisite Torments, and to die the most cruel Death, than to deny Christ, was said in a peculiar and more emphatical Sense to have *overcome*. And to those Persons we must understand these great Promises, to be *primarily* and more *immediately* made. But that they proportionably belong to all *other* Christians also, who in the midst of any *other* Temptations shall *keep the Works* of Christ, and victoriously persevere in their Integrity to the End, is evident. For the Promise is not made to him that overcometh, for That Reason because 'tis this or that particular Temptation that he overcomes ; but because he maintains his Integrity inviolable to the last, notwithstanding the Force of any Temptation to the contrary. And perhaps, if we consider the Matter closely, 'tis not easie to determine which is more difficult and shows a greater constancy of Mind, to die for the sake of Christ, or to live in the constant Contempt of all the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Life ; to part
actually

actually with all our temporal Goods for the Name of Christ, or to keep them with such indifferency as if we enjoyed them not. Those Persons therefore who entering early into the Profession of Religion, when their Temptations to Sin were most numerous and most powerful, continued stedfast in the Love of God and of Virtue, unmoved amidst the perpetual *Allurements of Pleasure*, the dazzling *Vanities of worldly Glory*, and the manifold *Deceitfulness of Riches*; were by the Ancients look'd upon with no less Esteem, than those who suffered for the Name of Christ; and were thought to have a Title to as great a Reward.

6. Let those who have still the Time before them, and are so happy as not to have been yet seduced *through the Deceitfulness of Sin*, consider these Things. Let *them* consider what a Prize they have in their Hands; and let them be zealous that *no Man take their Crown*. Let them consider, that if God and Angels rejoyce at the Conversion of *an old and great Sinner*, much more must they be pleased to see a *young Person* amidst the alluring Glories and Pleasures of the World, bravely resisting all its Temptations. Let *them* consider that *That Time*, which a dying Sinner would, if it were possible, give Millions of Worlds to redeem, is now in their Hands; and they may make a glorious Use of it.

Let

Let *them* consider, that they are yet cloathed with the white Robe of Innocence ; and if they be careful never to *defile that Garment*, they may attain to a Portion among those *few* who *shall walk with Christ in White* ; for *they are worthy*, Rev. iii, 4. Let *them* consider, that if they zealously continue to maintain their Innocence and their good Works for a few Years, they will soon be almost out of the Danger of Temptation ; they will escape the bitter Pangs of Remorse and Repentance ; they will be wholly above that greatest of humane Miseries, the dread and horreur of Death ; and may, not only without Fear, but even with exceeding Joy, expect the Appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ at the Judgment of the great Day, and in the Glory of the World to come. Lastly, let *them* consider, that if they *hold fast the Confidence and Rejoicing of their Hope firm unto the End*, they shall be intitled to all those great and inconceivable Promises, which our Saviour has made to those who shall overcome. *To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God*, Rev. ii, 7 ; *He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second Death*, verse 11 ; *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white Raiment, and I will not blot his Name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess his Name*

Name before my Father, and before his Angels, Rev. iii, 5. Him that overcometh, will I make a Pillar in the Temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the Name of my God, and the Name of the City of my God, which is New Jerusalem, verse xii. And, To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his Throne, verse 21.



CHAP. X.

Of making Religion the principal Business of our Lives.

1. **T**Hirdly, Resolve to make Religion the main Scope of all your Actions, and the principal Business of your Life. One great Reason, why Religion, which was the reigning Principle that wholly governed the Lives of the Primitive Christians; has now so little Influence upon the Actions of Men; is, because those Holy Men sought first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and relied upon the Providence of God to have all other Things added unto them; whereas

whereas now Men make Religion not their *first*, but their *last* Care ; and while their whole *Hearts and Affections* are set upon the Things of this present World, they think themselves sufficiently Religious, if they spend but some *small Portions of their Time* in the outward and ceremonious Act of Religion. But if Religion be the same now, that it was in the Times of the *Primitive Christians* ; if the Happiness proposed to us, be the same for which *they* so painfully contended ; if our Obligations, (excepting perhaps some few particular Cases) be the same with *theirs* ; this *slight, careless and superficial* Religion, will not serve our Turn. He that will obtain that Crown of Immortality, which God has promised to those who Love and Obey him, must be *effectually and substantially* Religious in the *main* Course of his Life ; and he that will be so *truly and sincerely* Religious, must make that Religion his *principal* and his *first* Care.

2. By making Religion the *principal Care and Study* of our Lives, I do not mean that Men should withdraw themselves from their Business and Employments in the World, to spend their Time anxiously in *Reading, Praying, Meditating*, and the like. These Things are not the *whole*, nor the *principal Part* of Religion ; And it is an *Ancient and Notorious* Error, to think that Men can

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become

become more truly Religious, by the continued Exercises of a *private Retirement*, than by living Soberly, Righteously, and Godly *in the World*. The Life and Substance of Religion, is, to have our Minds *habitually possessed with the profoundest Veneration of the Divine Majesty, and with a Desire of expressing at all proper Opportunities, our Devotion to him, and our Zeal for his Honour*; To endeavour constantly, in the whole Course of our Lives, to promote the Good and the Happiness of all Men; and to be temperate in the Use of all Earthly Enjoyments, as those who expect their Happiness, not in this World, but in the next. This is the Essence of true Religion; and These Things a Man may make his principal, nay, even his whole Care, without any way neglecting, or in the least withdrawing himself from his Secular and Worldly Business. There is no Employment, wherein a Man may not be always doing something for the Honour of God, for the Good of Men, or for the Improvement of the Virtues of his own Mind. There is no Business, wherein a Man may not make it his main Care, to act always like a good Man and a Christian. There is no State of Life, wherein a Man may not keep a constant Eye upon a future State; and so use the Things of this present World, as that the great and ultimate

ultimate Scope of all his Actions may always respect *that which is to come*.

3. And to make Religion *thus far* the principal Business of our Lives, is absolutely and indispensably necessary. No Man *can* overcome the Temptations of the World ; No Man *can* be truly and effectually Religious ; unless he *stedfastly* proposes to himself one great Design of his Life, and endeavours to act always *regularly* upon that Design. He must constantly keep an Eye upon his *main End* ; and in every Thing he does, must be careful always to have a respect to *that*. Every Thing he undertakes, must be either directly conducive to that End, or at least not contrary to, and inconsistent with it. In a word, he must be true to himself, and to his own Happiness ; and be resolute never to be tempted to do any Thing, which *he knows* he shall afterwards wish undone. For otherwise, if a Man acts only uncertainly, according to the present Appearances of Things, and without any fixt Design ; it must needs be, that every violent Temptation will either surprize or over-power him, and his Religion will be as inconstant as his Resolutions : His *Life* will be at best no other than a continued Circle of *sinning and repenting* ; and his *End* will be in nothing but *Uncertainties and Fears*.

C H A P. XI.

Of the Contempt of the World.

1. **F**ourthly, Endeavour to get above all the Desires of this present World. This is the *hardest* Lesson in Religion, but withal the most *necessary* and the most *useful*. All Wickedness proceeds from the immoderate Desire of some temporal Enjoyment or other; and the *Love of the World* is most immediately *the Root of all Evil*. No Man sins, but when he is seduced by an over-fond Desire of some Honour, Profit, or Pleasure; and no Man can be sure of preserving his Innocence, so long as he is enslaved to and under the Dominion of any of these Desires. The Way therefore to *lay the Ax to the Root of the Tree*, and to remove the Foundation and first Cause of our Misery, is, to get above all the Desires of these transitory Enjoyments, and to keep them perfectly in subjection and under the command of Reason. We must be able to condemn these Things, even where they are *Innocent*; and then we may be secure, that they shall never be able to seduce and intice us into any Thing that is *sinful*.

2. Now the Means by which the Christian Religion teaches us to do this, is not

(as I have already said) by retiring and withdrawing our selves from the World, to neglect all Business and lay aside all Secular Cares ; but, by fixing our Thoughts steadfastly upon that future State, which the Gospel has clearly discovered to us ; to fill our Minds with such strong and vigorous Ideas of the Happiness of the *next World*, as will, in any State of Life, beget and preserve in us a settled Contempt of all the Enjoyments of *this*.

3. The first and lowest Degree of this *Contempt of the World*, is, a *Resolution not to purchase any of its Enjoyments with the Commission of any great and known Sin*. This is the very lowest Degree of Sincerity ; and the least that any one, who pretends at all to be a Christian, can resolve with himself to do for the sake of God and Religion. He who, to purchase any Honour or Profit, will not scruple to make use of downright Fraud, or of any Means which he himself knows and is convinced to be unlawful : He who, to gratifie any sensual Appetite, and to enjoy a present Pleasure, will venture directly to break a positive and express Command ; such a one bids open Defiance to God and Virtue, and can hardly impose upon himself with any vain Imaginations of his being Religious.

4. The next Degree of this *Contempt of the World*, is a *Willingness to part with all Things for the sake of Christ*, when we cannot keep them together with our Religion. This also our Saviour absolutely requires of them that will be his Disciples. *If any Man come to me, and hate not his Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, and Brethren and Sisters, yea, and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple: And whosoever doth not bear his Cross, and come after me, cannot be my Disciple*, Luke xiv, 26, 27. 'Tis true, this is more peculiarly adapted to those early times of the Gospel, when 'twas impossible for a Man to imbrace the Doctrine of Christ, and profess himself his Disciple, but he must immediately forsake all that he had in the World, and become poor, in the most literal Sense, for Christ's sake: But certainly it *thus far* obliges Christians at all times, and even when God does not call them to suffering and parting with all for his Sake, that they ought to have such an indifferency for the Things of this World, as to be always in a readiness to part with whatever shall come in Competition with their Duty.

5. But there is yet another Degree of this *Contempt of the World*; which, though less considered, is yet of more universal and more constant Obligation. And that is, that *We be sparing and temperate in the Use*
even

even of lawful and innocent Enjoyments, as those who expect their Portion not in the Pleasures of this World, but in the Happiness of the next. This is the proper and peculiar Virtue of the Christian Religion; and indeed the only true Rule of *Temperance*. To give Men a full Liberty of satisfying to the utmost all their sensual Appetites in all Instances not directly forbidden, and to set their Hearts upon the Enjoyment of all worldly Pleasures, as far as they can possibly within the Limits of Innocence; is to allow Men a Liberty which Experience shows they cannot bear, and which will certainly seduce them into the Borders of Sin. On the other Hand, to restrain Men from enjoying the good Things of this present World, any further than is strictly necessary to preserve their Life and Health; is to lay a Snare on the Consciences of Men, and to tie them up to what God and Nature has not tied them. The only true measure therefore of Christian *Temperance*, is, that we so govern our selves with respect to the Injoyments of this present Life, as becomes those who profess to be *Followers of Christ*, and *Candidates for Heaven*; who look upon *this World* only as a State of Labour and Trial, but expect their Portion and their Happiness in *the World to come*: That is, that we so use these *present good Things*, as to preserve our selves always

in the *Disposition fittest for the Performance of our Duty*; to keep the *Flesh* always in Subjection to the *Spirit*; and to maintain constantly that *Temper of Mind*, which may prepare and fit us for the *Enjoyment of God*, and for the *Happiness of Heaven*.

6. The Design of the Christian Religion, is, to draw off Men's Affections from Things Earthly and Sensible, and to fix them on Nobler and Spiritual Objects. It gives us the most refined Precepts exemplified in the Life of our Saviour, for our Rule to walk by; and sets before us, as the Reward of our Obedience, the Happiness of that Place where we *shall be like to God*, because we *shall see him as he is*. The first Thing therefore that our Saviour requires of them that will be *his Disciples*; is, *so* to wean themselves from this *present World*, as to be always prepared for the more spiritual Happiness of that which is *to come*. The first Thing that the Christian Religion teaches us; is *so* to look beyond this World in the main Scope of our Lives, and to have so slight an Esteem for, and be so little immersed in, all earthly Enjoyments; as to have our Hearts fixed always there, where we expect our Treasure. It teaches us to look upon the good Things of this present World, as Talents committed to our Charge; for the doing what Good we can in the *present State*, and thereby

thereby purchasing to our selves a Treasure incorruptible *in the future*. It teaches us to *set our Affections wholly on Things above*, and to have *our Conversation always in Heaven*. It teaches us to *love God*, as the Supream and only Good ; and to make it the Business and the Pleasure of our Life, to *Advance his Glory and to promote his Religion*.

7. This is the Disposition of Mind, which the Christian Religion requires of all its Professors. And that this Disposition of Mind cannot otherwise be attained and preserved, than *by working our selves up to a great Contempt of the World ; by being very temperate in the enjoyment of earthly Pleasures ; and by withdrawing our Affections from the Desires of them ;* is evident. No Man who *bath this World's Goods*, can chearfully and bountifully bestow them to the *Glory of God* and to the *Good of Men*, so long as he retains an overfond Affection for the *Splendour* of the World, and cannot deny himself in any of its *Pleasures*. No Man can set his *Affections* on *Things above*, while he places his *Happiness* in *Things here below* ; nor have his *Conversation* and his *Citizenship* in *Heaven*, while his *Heart* and *Desires* are fixed on *Earth*. In a word ; no Man can love *God* as the Supreme and only Good, and make Religion heartily the Business of his Life ;

while his Affections are fondly fastned on the *Pleasures of Earth*, and the *Gratifications of Sense*.

8. He who notwithstanding his Belief of the Gospel, does yet retain such a Love for the World, as that he cannot perswade himself, without great Regret, to part with any present Gratification ; and is sollicitous, not to be as Religious and to do as much good as he can, but to live as sensually, and to enjoy as much Pleasure, as he thinks possibly consistent with the Hopes of Happiness ; such a one's divided Affections and unmortified Desires will certainly be too strong for the Governance of his Reason ; and his unwillingness to part with *the Pleasures of this Life*, will be in great danger to deprive him of *the Happiness of the next*. *No Servant can serve two Masters ; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other ; ye cannot serve God and Mammon*, Luke xvi, 13. *The Carnal, or sensual Mind, saith St Paul, is Enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be*, Rom. viii, 7. And in the 1st Epistle of St. John, chap. ii, verse 15. *If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him*. The avoiding eternal Misery, and acquiring endless Bliss, is not so easie and trivial a Matter, as to be the Purchase of a few faint Wishes, the Work of a

Mind distracted, and, as it were, wholly taken up with other Cares. He that hath proposed to us this glorious Reward, has yet proposed it upon such Conditions, as that we think it worth our caring for. He indispensably requires, that we fix our Affections upon Heavenly Things ; And, though we may and ought to make use of the Blessings of this World thankfully, as Accommodations in our Journey ; yet that in the whole Course of our Lives, the general Design of our Actions be directed to this great End. If therefore we suffer other Things so to interpose, as to steal away our Hearts and Affections ; we cannot possibly keep up this Disposition. Man's Nature and Operations are finite ; and what Time and Attention he bestows on one Thing, must necessarily be substracted from another. If then the Vanities of this World entertain and busie us, they must unavoidably interrupt our Attendance on the *one Thing necessary* ; and when we begin to look upon these *deceitful Things* as our proper Happiness, our Esteem will in proportion decrease to those which *really* are so. Hence the *Cares of the World*, the *Deceitfulness of Riches*, and the *Pleasures of this Life*, are said to *choke the Word*, and it becometh unfruitful, Matth. xiii, 22 ; compared with Luke viii, 14. And St Paul tells us, 1 Tim. vi, 9, that *they who will be rich*, that is, they

whose Desires are too eagerly bent upon the good Things of this present Life, *fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition.*

9. And that this over-fond Love of the present World, this sollicitous Desire after Riches and Pleasures, is inconsistent with that Disposition of Mind which the Christian Religion requires; seems to be the true and principal Scope of several of our Saviour's *Parables* to demonstrate. The Parable of the *rich Man*, Luke xvi, is evidently intended to this Purpose. He is described to have been *clothed in Purple and fine Linnen*, and to have fared *sumptuously every Day*: And when in Hell he *lift up his Eyes and saw Abraham afar off*, and cried to him to *have mercy upon him, and to send Lazarus that he might dip the Tip of his Finger in Water, and cool his Tongue*; the Answer he received was this; *Son, remember that thou in thy Lifetime receivedst thy good Things, and likewise Lazarus evil Things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* 'Tis not said, that he had spent his Substance in *Rioting and Drunkenness*; 'tis not said, that he had deserved this Punishment for his *Cruelty and Uncharitableness*: But only that he had lived *delicately*; and fared *sumptuously*; that he had already received his good Things; (that is, that he had

had received a plentiful Share of the good Things of this present Life, and that he had set his Heart upon them as his Portion and his Happiness;) and that therefore now there remained nothing for him, but to be *tormented*.

10. That the Design of this Parable is not meerly to condemn *Rioting* and *Extravagancy*, *Drunkenness* and *Excess*, is evident. For had *that* only been the Design of it, the rich Man would have been plainly described to have been guilty of those Vices. But since *our Saviour* does not directly lay those Things to his Charge; neither must *we* do it. The Parable says, he was *clothed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared sumptuously every Day*: And, as his Station in the World might be, he may fairly be supposed to do so without the Imputation of great *Excess*. As God has placed Men in different Stations in the World, and accordingly made very different Distributions of the good Things of this Life amongst them; so it cannot be denied, but that these good Things may be made use of, according to every Man's Quality and Condition. It cannot therefore be certainly collected from the rich Man's faring sumptuously, that he wasted his Substance in *riotous living*, as the *Prodigal* is described to have done in the foregoing Chapter; for he would certainly in this Place

Place have been directly accused of doing so, if the Parable had been levelled against nothing less than *Rioting* and great *Excess*.

II. Again ; that the Design of this Parable is not meerly to condemn *Uncharitableness* and *Cruelty*, is further evident. For though it represents the *rich Man* on the one Hand, *clothed in Purple and fine Linnen, and faring sumptuously every Day* ; and on the other hand, the *poor Man lying at his Gate full of Sores, and desiring to be fed with the Crumbs that fell from the rich Man's Table* ; yet it contains only this Description of the poor Man's Condition, in opposition to that of the rich Man, without taking any notice at all of their Behaviour one to another. Though therefore it may justly be supposed, that our Saviour designed to hint to us, that the poor Man did not meet with that Comfort and Relief, which might reasonably be expected in a place where there was such Plenty and abundance of all Things ; and that this did very much increase the rich Man's Condemnation ; yet this is not the Thing that is *now* laid to his Charge, and therefore is not the *main* Design of the Parable. Parables are certain familiar Ways of representing Things to the Capacity of the Vulgar, by easie and continued Similitudes ; and the Close of the Similitude always shows

shows the *principal* Scope of the Parable ; as is evident in most of our Saviour's Discourses to the *Jews*. Had our Saviour therefore in this Parable chiefly designed to show the Evil of Uncharitableness, and the Condemnation that attends uncharitable Men ; he would (when he had represented the rich Man crying out to *Abraham* to have Mercy upon him, and begging that he would send *Lazarus* that he might dip the Tip of his Finger in Water and cool his Tongue ;) he would here, I say, have introduced the Patriarch charging him with his Uncharitableness, as the Cause of his being cast into that Place of Torment. It would have been told him, that since when he lived in Ease and Plenty, and in the abundant Injoyment of all the good Things of this Life, *he* had had no regard to the then miserable Estate of this *poor Man* ; he had no reason to expect, now that the Scale was turned, and himself fallen into a State of Misery, that the *poor Man* should leave that Place of Happiness, which is figured to us by *Abraham's* Bosom, to come and quench the Violence of the Flame that tormented *him*. He would have been told, that 'twas but just, that since he had *shewed* no Mercy, none should be *shewn* to him ; and that he should receive no Relief from the *poor Man* after Death, to whom he had *given* none when he was alive. But instead

stead of all this, we find only that short Reply ; *Son, remember that thou in thy Life-time receivest thy good Things ; and now thou art tormented.*

12. It remains therefore, that the Reason for which this rich Man is represented as condemned to that Place of Torment, is, because he had in his Life-time received his Portion of good Things : That is, not because he had received the Blessings of this World, but because he had received and used them *as his Portion and his Happiness.* He had a large and plentiful Estate ; and he spent it in Jollity and Splendour. He was clothed in *Purple and fine Linnen,* and he fared sumptuously every Day. He denied himself nothing, that tended to the Ease and Pleasure of his *own Life* ; or that could make him look splendid in the Eyes of Others. Hereupon he accounted himself a *happy Man,* and blessed himself in the *Multitude of his Riches.* He looked on them not as Talents committed to him by God, to be employed for the *doing Good in his Generation* ; but as his *own Portion,* that he might live in Ease and Plenty, and that *his Heart might cheer him in the Days of his Life.* His Treasure therefore was upon Earth ; and his *Heart and Affections* were there also. He set up his Rest here ; and was so wholly taken up with the Splendour and Gaity of *this World,* that he had no time to

think

think upon *another* ; 'till he found, by wo-
ful Experience, that he had settled his Af-
fections upon a wrong Object, and chosen
those Things for his Portion and his Hap-
piness, which were not to be of equal Du-
ration with himself. Thus the Design of
this *Parable* seems plainly to be this ; to
condemn a *soft* and *easie*, a *delicate* and *vo-
luptuous* Life ; And to show, that for those
who have a plentiful Share of Earthly
Blessings, to make it their main De-
sign to live in Ease and Pleasure, in Gaie-
ty and Splendour with them ; to set their
Affections entirely upon them, to esteem
them as their good Things, and to place
their Happiness in them ; is inconsistent
with that Temper and Disposition of Mind,
which the Christian Religion requires in
those, who expect their Portion in the Spi-
ritual Happiness of the World to come.
And to this Sense we must understand those
Sayings of our Saviour, *Luke* vi, 25 ; *Wo
unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger ;
wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall
mourn and weep : And ver. 24 ; Wo unto
you that are rich, for ye have received your
Consolation ; That is, ye have received those
Things which ye accounted your Portion,
and wherein ye placed your Happiness.*

13. In like manner, the *Parable* of that
other *rich Man*, *Luke* xii, whose *Ground*
brought forth plentifully ; and he thought with-
in

in himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my Fruits? And he said, this will I do, I will pull down my Barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my Fruits and my Goods: And I will say to my Soul, Soul, thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry: This Parable, I say, seems also plainly designed against the same softness and voluptuousness of Life. Our Saviour does not describe this Man to be Covetous, and that he would store up all his Goods to no use; but that he would take the Good of them himself, he would eat, drink, and be merry. 'Tis the same Word that we render elsewhere, to fare sumptuously. But God said unto him, Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee; and then whose shall those Things be, which thou hast provided? His Case seems to be the very same with that of the rich Man, Luke 16. The one resolved that in his Life-time he would eat, drink, and be merry; and in the midst of his Jollity, his Soul was required of him: The other was cloathed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared sumptuously every Day; and when after Death he complained that he was in a place of Torment, he was by Abraham reminded, that he had in his Life-time received his good Things.

14. Lastly

14. Lastly, The History of the young Man, Mark x, who came running and kneeled to our Saviour, and asked him, *Good Master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal Life?* is an eminent Instance of the Deceitfulness of the Love of the World. He had kept all the Commandments from his Youth; and therefore, one would think, was well prepared, to receive our Saviour's Doctrine: Yet when he bad him, *Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven, and come, take up thy Cross and follow me;* 'tis said, he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great Possessions. 'Tis not said, either that he was covetous on the one hand, or prodigal on the other; much less that he spent his Substance in *Revelling and Drunkenness*: But here was his Fault; his Heart was set upon his great Possessions, and he could not persuade himself to part with them, though upon the prospect of an extraordinary Reward. So unfit is a Mind deeply immersed in the Love of this present World, for the Reception of the Truth and Severity of the Gospel; And so difficult is it for those who have a large Share of the good Things of this World, not to be thus immersed in the Love of it.

15. For

15. For this Reason it is, that *great Riches* and *continual Prosperity in the World*, are all along through the *New Testament* described as a very dangerous and unsafe State. Persecution has not a greater Power to force Men *violently* from their Duty, than Riches and great Prosperity have to supplant them *insensibly*, and to intice them from it. Riches and Prosperity do by degrees soften and debase Men Minds; they do, as it were, tie Men down, and fasten their Affections to the Things of this present World; they sensualize Mens Thoughts, and divert them from taking any Pleasure in the Contemplation of Spiritual and Divine Things. In a word, they ply Men so constantly with fresh Baits and Temptations, and are so continually pressing them to satisfy their sensual Appetites; that without a very great Measure of the Grace of God, and an extraordinary degree of Temperance and Contempt of the World, Man's Mind is not able to keep it self free from the Service of so enticing a Master.

16. And this I take to be the meaning of those severe Sayings of our Saviour, *Matth. xix, 23, Verily I say unto you, that a rich Man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye*
of

of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God. At which, when his Disciples, taking his Words in too strict a Sense, were astonished above measure; he answered again, and said unto them, *Mark x, 24, Children, how hard it is for them that trust in Riches, to enter into the Kingdom of God!* He does not say that 'tis absolutely impossible for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: But because 'tis certain that they who put their Trust in Riches, never shall; and because 'tis exceeding hard for them that have Riches, not to put their Trust in them; therefore he says, *How hardly shall they that have Riches, enter into the Kingdom of God!* Riches, and constant Prosperity, are so great a Temptation, that with Men, i. e. humanly speaking, it is not possible for one who enjoys these Things, to be a good Christian; though with God, i. e. with the Grace of God, to which all Things are possible, this Temptation may not only be overcome; but those Riches which are to most Men an occasion of falling, may become the Matter of a more extraordinary Virtue, and the occasion of a Man's doing much more good in this World, and obtaining a much greater degree of Happiness in the next. Our Saviour does not therefore say, that a rich Man cannot possibly be saved; or that any Man shall be miserable in the other World,
for

for no other Reason than because he has been *happy in this* ; but only that Riches are *exceeding apt* to lull Men into that trust in and love of the World, which is inconsistent with that Disposition of Mind and Soul, which the Christian Religion requires of those who expect their Portion in another Life.

17. And hence are those so frequent and repeated Exhortations in the *New Testament*, to *mortifie our earthly Desires*, and to *deny our selves* ; *Not to love the World*, *neither the Things that are in the World*, 1 John ii, 15. *Not to lay up for our selves Treasure upon Earth*, *where Moth and Rust doth corrupt*, *and where Thieves break through and steal* ; *but to lay up for our selves Treasure in Heaven*, Matth. vi, 19. *To set our Affections on Things above*, *not on Things on the Earth*, Colos. iii, 2. *And to take heed and beware of Covetousness*, *for that a Man's Life consisteth not in the abundance of the Things which he possesseth*, Luke xii, 15. *To beware of Covetousness* ; that is, *not of hoarding up Riches to no use* (as we generally understand the Word) *but of setting our Hearts upon Riches*, and employing them to no other End, than living merrily and splendidly in the World ; As is most evident from the *Parable of the rich Man whose Ground brought forth plentifully*, following immediately in the next Words.

18. 'Tis

18. 'Tis therefore a necessary Duty in those who believe the Gospel of Christ, and profess themselves his Disciples, if God calls them not to suffer and to part with all for his Sake, yet at least to *wean themselves from the Love of this present World*, and to *get above the Desires* of it. They must be careful to use the good Things of this Life so, as not to *corrupt and soften*, to *sensualize and debase* their Minds, and to *clog and unfit them for the Contemplation of Spiritual and Divine Things*. They must remember, that they receive *this World's Goods*, not that they may live in *ease and softness*, in *Delicacy* and *Voluptuousness* with them, but that they may thankfully employ them to the *Glory of God* and to the *Good of Men*. In a word, they must always be careful so to behave themselves with respect to all earthly Enjoyments, as may become those, who look upon *the present Life* as a state of *Labour and Trial*, but expect their *Happiness* and their *Reward* in *the future*. This is (as I have said) the true Measure of Christian Temperance; and this Temper of Mind, every one who will be the Disciple of *Christ*, must resolve to attain.

19. If this seem hard to any one, let him consider, that as a Mind sensualized and wedded to earthly Things, is *here* utterly unfit for a *spiritual and heavenly Life*; so it must also *hereafter* be as utterly incapable

pable of the *heavenly Glory*. If a Man places his Happiness in the *Contemplation of God*, and the *Exercise of Virtue* here, he shall continue to enjoy it also hereafter ; because *God* and *Virtue* continue for ever. But if he places his Happiness in the Pleasures of this World, and in the Enjoyments of Sense ; when these Things are at an end, his Happiness must be at an end also. Men's Minds are by degrees tinctured, and transformed into the Nature of the Things they are fixed upon ; and in such Things as they delight to dwell upon, in such Things must be their Portion. Hence *Tully*, and, after him, some *Christian* Writers have thought, that the Souls of Worldly-minded Men shall carry with them into the other State such strong Affections and Desires after the Things they delighted in here, that, were a sensual Person to be admitted even into the *Seat of the Blessed*, yet he should find nothing there that could make him happy.

20. But however this be (which I shall not now nicely dispute,) certain it is, that nothing is more *reasonable*, than that those who place their Happiness in the Enjoyments of *this* Life, should come short of the Glories of the *next*. We all know how short and transitory the present Life is ; and the Scripture every where tells us, that we are Strangers and Sojourners in the World ; we are now only in a state of
Trial,

Trial, and travelling as it were through a strange Country, to our proper Home. *Whilst we are at Home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord, 2 Cor. v, 6 ; And here we have no continuing City, but we seek one to come, Heb. xiii, 14.* Now therefore if Men will stop in the midst of their Journey, and make their Inn their Home ; If they will place their Happiness in those Things, which God has given them only as Conveniencies for their present state ; what can be more reasonable, than that God should assign them their Portion in those Things ? Man's Soul is Spiritual and Immortal, and by the Nobleness of its Nature, exalted above the Vanities of this present Life ; and though by being immersed in Body, it be necessitated to converse with Sensible and Corporeal Things, yet does it thirst after more pure and refined Objects ; it can look beyond this World to its Native Country, and knows that its proper Happiness, is by imitating the Life of God, to be made partaker of his Glory. Now if Men, notwithstanding all this, will take up with sensual and earthly Enjoyments ; if they *will* clog the flight of the Soul, and stake it down to these ignoble Objects ; if they *will* set their Hearts and Affections on these Things, which God has given them as Matter for the Exercise of their Virtue ; what can be more just, than that

God should suffer them to satiate themselves with their beloved Pleasures, and deny them those nobler Ones which they so little esteemed? 'Tis certain the Blessings of this World are Talents committed to our Charge, which God expects we should lay out to his Glory and the Benefit of the World; and to whom he has committed many of them, of him he will require the more. He expects we should do what good we can with them; which is called in Scripture, *giving out our Money to the Exchangers, that when our Lord cometh, he may receive his own with Usury*. Now if instead of this, we enjoy these Things wholly ourselves, and employ them only to the serving our own Worldly Designs; what can be more reasonable, than that God should suffer them to be our Portion and Reward? The *Pharisees* in our Saviour's time were notoriously covetous and worldly-minded, doing even their Acts of Charity meerly for the praise of Men; and our Saviour repeats it no less than thrice in the *Sixth* of *St Matthew*, that they *had their Reward*. The rich *Jews* also made generally no other Use of their Riches, than to live in Ease and Pleasure, in Gaiety and Splendour; and our Saviour tells them, that *they had received their Consolation*.

21. The Happiness of Heaven is a great and glorious Reward ; And *they who will be accounted worthy to obtain that World, and the Resurrection from the Dead*, Luke xx, 35. must be content not to live a soft and easie, a sensual and voluptuous Life ; but to *labour diligently, and to work out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. Our Saviour compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a *Pearl of great Price*, which when a *Merchant-man found, he sold all that he had, and bought it*, Matt. xiii, 46 : And whoever hath worthy Notions of the *Things that God hath prepared for them that love him*, can never think any thing hard, to purchase so great a Treasure. St Paul compares the Reward of Virtue to a Crown, for which *they who run in a Race, run all, but one receiveth the Prize*. And if *they who strive for the Mastery, to obtain a corruptible Crown, are temperate in all Things*, 1 Cor. ix, 24 ; that is, are careful to prepare their Bodies before-hand for the Race ; that they may run, not uncertainly, but so that they may obtain : how much more ought we to bring the **Body into subjection**, and by Temperance prepare it for the Christian Warfare, who are to strive for an *incorruptible and never-fading Crown* ?

22. The History of *our Saviour* is an Example, as of a Life not morose and retired from the World, so of a Life very far from

being sensual and voluptuous. *He* utterly despised all the Grandeur and Pleasures of the World, and willingly endured the Scorn and Contempt of obstinate and malicious Men, that he might establish the Worship and true Religion of God. *He went about doing Good*, Acts x, 38; making *that* the whole Business of his Life, and cheerfully submitting to undergo any Hardship, that he might instruct the Ignorant or relieve the Distressed. And if we hope at last to be made *partakers of his Glory*, we must resolve now in some measure to imitate his Life, who has left us an Example, that we should follow his Steps, 1 Pet. ii, 21. The Lives of all the Saints of God, who have gone before us, are eminent Examples, not of Ease and Softness, but either of great Sufferings for the Cause of Religion, or of great Zeal and Pains in it. The Patriarchs who lived before our Saviour, and saw the Promises only *afar off*, confessed that they were *Strangers and Pilgrims in the Earth*, and that their Hopes were fixed upon a better Country, that is, *an Heavenly*: And all the Primitive Christians, who first followed our Saviour, and saw the Promises fulfilled, did either through Persecutions become *Naked, Destitute, and Afflicted*, or by their boundless Charity and Contempt of the World, did almost make themselves so. And if we hope to have our Portion among these

these Servants of the most High, in that *general Assembly and Church of the First-born*, in that *heavenly Jerusalem, the City of the living God*, Heb. xii, 23 ; we must in some proportion conform our selves to the Imitation of *their Zeal, their Labour and their Patience* ; and not be wholly carried away with the Coldness and Indifferency of a careless and corrupt Age. *They* generally parted with *all Things* for the sake of Christ : And certainly *we* are at least bound, not to fasten our Affections so strongly upon the Things of this World, as hardly to be able to deny our selves *any thing*. *Their* Temperance, their Abstinence, and their Contempt of the World, was almost incredible and excessive ; and assuredly *we* cannot with the same Hopes spend our whole Lives, in nothing but Softness, Gallantry and Pleasure. In fine, *Their* Charity was wonderful and boundless, extending it self even to such Instances as we can hardly think credible ; and can *we* imagine, that *we* are not obliged to do at least *something*, and to take *some* Pains, for the *Glory of God*, and for the *Good of Men* ?

23. Lastly, If these Things seem hard, and tend to intrench too much upon the Pleasures of Life ; consider the Conclusion and final Upshot of Things. Consider what Opinion we shall have of Things at the Conclusion of our Lives, when *Death*

and Judgment approach ; and let us view Things *now* in the same Light, as we know certainly we shall be forced to do *then*. We know we shall *then* lament the Loss of every Opportunity of doing Good, which we have omitted ; and shall grudge every Minute of Folly and Vanity, which might have been employed to the increase of the Portion of our future Happiness. We know we shall *then* look upon all the past Pleasures of Life, as emptiness and nothing ; and be convinced that there is no Pleasure but in true Virtue, and no Fruit in any Thing but having done much Good. And if we do indeed know this, what can be more miserably and more inexcusably foolish, than not to make the same Judgment of things *now*, as we know assuredly we shall do afterwards ? The reason why Men die full of *Fears* and *Uncertainties*, full of *dark Suspicions* and *Confused Doubts*, is because they are conscious to themselves that they have lived *carelessly* and *indifferently* ; without having taken any Pains either for the *Service of God*, or for the *Good of Men* ; and without having used any zealous Endeavours, to overcome the *present World*, or to obtain the *future*. But if Men would consider things in time ; if they would pass true Judgments of Things, and act accordingly with Resolution and Constancy ; they might

might then know certainly their own State,
and might *live with Comfort, and die with Assurance.*



C H A P. XII.

Of our Obligation to be particularly careful to avoid those Sins, to which we are most in danger to be tempted.

I. **F**ifthly, *Be particularly careful to resist and avoid those Sins, to which either your Constitution, Company or Employment, make you most in danger to be tempted.* This is the great Trial of every Man's Sincerity, and of his Growth in Virtue. He that for the Love of God and the Hopes of Heaven, can mortifie and deny his most darling Lusts, can quell and keep under his most natural Passions, can resist and constantly overcome those Temptations by which he is most in danger to be seduced into Sin; such a one has an infallible Assurance of his own Sincerity, and is very near to the Perfection of Virtue.

But if there be any one Instance, wherein a Man habitually falls short of his Duty, or indulges a Lust, a Passion, a sinful Desire;

'tis certain, whatever other Virtues he may be endued with, that he either acts upon wrong Principles, and is not sincere; or that his Resolutions are hitherto too weak and ineffectual, to intitle him to the *Comfort of Religion* here, or to the *Assurance of Happiness* hereafter.

2. There is no Man whom either the *Constitution of his Body* or the *Temper of his Mind*, the *Nature of his Employment* or the *Humour of his Company*, does not make obnoxious to some particular sort of Temptations more than to any other: And in this Thing it is, that those who have something of Sincerity, and will not with others *run into all Excess of Riot*, do yet make shift to deceive and impose upon themselves. They think they are indued with many good and virtuous Qualities; they hate Profane-ness and professed enormous Impiety; they know themselves innocent of many great Sins, which they see others continually commit: But something, to which they are particularly tempted, they indulge themselves in; and the fatal Mischief is, that those Sins which they see others commit, and to which themselves are not violently tempted, seem most absurd and unreasonable, and easie to be avoided; but that to which they are themselves addicted, they think to be either so small, as not to be of any very evil Consequence, or so difficult to be resisted,

sifted, as to be allowed for among the unavoidable Infirmities of Nature. Thus to many who have little or no Dealings in the World, the Sins of *Fraud, Injustice, Deceit, Over-reaching*, and the like, seem very heinous, base and unreasonable; while at the same time they allow themselves in habitual *Intemperance* and *Impurities*, as either harmless Vices, or almost insuperable Weaknesses. On the other hand, there are not fewer of those, who applaud themselves in their own Minds, that they are not as other Men, *Intemperate, Debauched, Drunkards, Revellers*, and the like; while at the same time they look upon *Fraud* and *Deceit, Tricking* and *Over-reaching*, as the necessary Art and Mystery of Business.

3. But this is a very great and a very fatal Cheat. No Man can have any true and solid Peace *in himself*; no man can have any just Confidence in his Addresses *to God*; no Man can have any Title to the Promises and Comforts of Religion *here*; much less to the Glory and Reward of it *hereafter*; before his Obedience be, if not *Perfect*, yet at least *Universal*. God will not share with any Impiety; nor ever accept of any Man's Obedience, so long as 'tis mixed with *the accursed Thing*. If there be any Sin, that we can hardly part with; if there be any Lust, that is like a *Right Hand*, or a *Right Eye*; this is the Thing that God hath proposed

to us to conquer ; *this* is the good Fight, which we must fight through Faith ; *this* is the Victory to which Heaven is proposed. For *this*, we must gather together all the Forces of Reason and Religion ; for *this*, we must strengthen our selves by Prayer and Consideration : In *this* Warfare we must resolve strongly, persevere obstinately, and, though we be conquered, yet resolve to overcome ; always remembering, that *this* is the Stake for Life or Death, Happiness or Misery, Heaven or Hell.

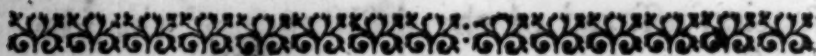
4. Here therefore let every Man consider with himself ; and let him well observe his own Temptations, and his own Strength. Let him consider, not how many Sins he can easily avoid, but by what Temptations he may most easily be seduced ; and let him make it his Business to guard himself there. Let those who are young, and not yet entred into the Hurry and Business of the World, not value themselves upon their being innocent from the Sins of *Fraud* and *Injustice*, of *Covetousness* and *Extortion*, or the like ; (for this perhaps they may be, without any Pains, and without overcoming any powerful Temptation ;) but let them try themselves, whether they be firm against the Temptations of *Vanity* and *Lightness*, of *Heat* and *Passion*, of *Intemperance* and *Impurity* ; and let them judge of themselves by their Behaviour in these Instances, wherein

wherein they are most obnoxious. Let them consider, that *their peculiar Task, is to overcome the wicked one, 1 John ii, 13; to subdue the Flesh to the Spirit; to conquer and get above those Pleasures, which sensualize the Soul, and enslave the Mind to the Body, and thereby bring it under the Power of Death and Destruction: And in fine, to strive continually to cleanse themselves from all Impurity, not only of Body, but even of Mind and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.* Let them consider, that they are by Baptism dedicated to the Service of God; that they are by Confirmation assured of the Assistance of the Holy Spirit; and that their Bodies are the *Temples of the Holy Ghost*; which if they keep here in *Temperance and Purity, in Sanctification and Honour*, they shall hereafter appear with them in *Glory*; But if they abuse them by any *Intemperance*, or defile them with any *Lust*, they drive away the Spirit whereby they are sealed unto the Day of *Redemption*, and forfeit their hope of Life. Again, on the other hand, Those whose *Age or Temper, or Company, or Business*, places them beyond the Follies and Extravagancies of Youth, and out of the way of those Temptations with which others are hurried away continually; must not esteem of themselves by their not running into those excesses of Riot, to which per-

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haps they have little or no Temptation ; but must examine whether they be exactly *Just* in the Business they are employed in ; whether they be truly *Useful* and *Charitable* according to their Ability ; and whether they be sincerely careful to resist those Temptations, to which their particular Circumstances, whatever they be, do more especially expose them. This is the true Trial of every Man's Sincerity, and the most certain Rule by which every one may judge of his own State.



C H A P. XIII.

Of Growth in Grace, and of Perfection.

I. **L**ASTLY, *Strive continually to grow in Grace, and press forward toward Perfection.* So long as we continue in these Houses of Clay, encompassed perpetually with the *Infirmities* of the *Flesh*, the *Allurements* of the *World*, and the *Temptations* of the *Devil* ; we shall all offend indeed in many things, and can never arrive at the *Perfection* of *Virtue*. Yet unless we strive and press forwards towards *Perfection*, we shall never make any tolerable *Progress*. He that has
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no more Zeal for Religion, than to desire just to keep within the Borders of Virtue, and to escape the Punishment of Vice, will, in all probability, be deceived in his Expectations, and find when it is too late, that those who are *lukewarm*, and *neither cold nor hot*, are but *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*, Rev. iii, 17; and shall have no Portion among them that are arrayed in *fine Linnen*, which is the *Righteousness* and the good Works of the Saints. He whose Heart is inflamed with an ardent Love of God, and a truly zealous Desire of the Happiness of Heaven, will with St Paul never think he has already attained, or is already perfect enough; but forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, Phil. iii, 13, will always press forward towards the Mark, for the Prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He will never think himself good and holy enough; but getting continually a more compleat Victory over his Frailties and Infirmities, will go from Strength to Strength, Psal. lxxxiv, 7, in the Improvements of Vertue here, 'till he appear before God in the Perfection of Holiness and of Glory hereafter.

2. Think not, when you have once attained a clear Knowledge of your Duty, and framed hearty Resolutions to perform it, and begun to live according to that Knowledge and

and those Resolutions ; that you are presently in a *perfect and confirmed* State of Virtue. You must frequently *review and meditate upon* the Particulars of your Duty : You must frequently *renew and strengthen* your good Resolutions : And you must always be *correcting and amending* your Practice : 'Till that which was *well resolved upon*, and *bravely begun*, arrive by the degrees of a diligent and perpetual Improvement, to a *confirmed Habit* and *settled Temper* of Mind.

3. Think not, when you have performed your Duty according to the common Measures of Obedience, and the vulgarly reputed Bounds of the Obligation of the Christian Laws ; and when you are by others looked upon, as a good and just and holy Person ; that you are now arrived at the Perfection of Virtue. For the *Judgment of God* is very different from the *Opinion of Men* ; and such a Life as is now looked upon as very good and creditable, would in the Times of the Apostles or Primitive Christians have been thought, if not *scandalous*, yet at best very *cold and indifferent*. He that will be perfect, must be *above all Laws, and Customs, and Opinions* ; and must not limit his *Purity of Mind*, his *Contempt of the World*, and his *Desire of doing Good*, to any Degrees or Rules ; but must exalt them
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in proportion to his *Love of God*, and his *Hopes of Happiness*.

4. Further: Think not, when upon a *loose* and *general* view of your Life, your Conscience does not accuse you of any *scandalous* and *deliberate* Sins, that therefore you have attained to the highest pitch of Virtue. There are many Sins with which Men easily impose upon themselves; *much* indifferency in Religion, and coldness of Devotion; *many* Omissions of Duties, and Neglects of Opportunities of doing Good; *many* Faults of Surprize, and Indecencies of Passion; *much* Sensuality, and over-fond Love of the Things of this present World; *many* Excesses, and small Degrees of Intemperance; which are not to be discovered and overcome, without entring into a more *strict*, *particular* and *impartial* examination of our Actions; and making *repeated Resolutions*, and using *constant unwearied Endeavours* to correct whatever upon such strict search shall appear to be amiss.

5. Many there have been, (and some even among the Heathens themselves,) who have *every Night* strictly examined into the Actions of the *past Day*; that if they had done any thing for which they could reprove themselves, they might resolve to be more careful in that particular for the future; and if they found they had in all Points performed their Duty, they might confirm

confirm and encourage themselves to continue to perform it. Others have done this yet more frequently, and habitually; never *going about* any thing, without a short Thought how they might best act, for the Honour of God, for the good of Men, or for the Improvement of the Virtues of their own Mind; and never *having done* any thing, without a short Reflection, whether they had acted so, as was most agreeable to these great Ends.

6. These indeed are things not to be imposed upon any Man by any particular Rules, but such as must be wholly left to the Discretion of every Man, to be used according to each one's *Prudence* or *Zeal*. Only in general 'tis certain, that by how much the *more frequently* a Man examines the Actions of his Life, and by how much the *more strictly* he observes his smaller Failures, and by how much the *more particularly* he resolves and endeavours to correct them; by so much the more will his *Religion* be *uniform*, and his *Obedience perfect*. He that uses himself often to consider, and to recollect the particulars of his Duty; will perform many things, which others *know* indeed and *understand* in general, but through habitual carelessness and inconsiderateness *omit*. And he that often searches strictly into the smallest Errors of his Life, and prays against them, and resolves particularly and endeavours to amend them; will be able to avoid

void and overcome many of those things, which are by others looked upon as the unavoidable Frailties and Infirmities of Nature.

7. And in proportion as a Man arrives nearer to this perfect State of Virtue, so will That *Peace of Conscience*, which is the peculiar Reward of Religion in this World, grow up by degrees to a *settled Joy and Assurance of Mind*. One whose Life is void of great and scandalous Crimes, but otherwise not strict and diligent, will be free indeed from the Terrour and Amazement of the Wicked; but because he has taken no great Pains, nor done any thing considerable for the Love of God and for the Sake of Religion, his Mind will yet be disturbed with many scrupulous *Doubts* and uncertain *Fears*. But when a Man has been truly diligent to improve himself to the utmost, and has with *Zeal and Earnestness* pressed forwards towards Perfection; then is it that he attains to that Tranquillity and Assurance, which wise Men have compared to a *continual Feast*. The Peace and Satisfaction of Mind, which some have found upon the careful and strict examination of *one* past Day's Actions, has been very great: But That compleat Assurance, which arises from the Conscience of a considerable part of a Man's Life having been spent in the Strictness and in the Purity of the Gospel, is a Pleasure

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sure infinitely surpassing all the Enjoyments of Sense ; being indeed a Fore-taste of the Happiness of Heaven, and a Rejoycing before-hand in Christ *with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*, 1 Pet. i, 8. Such a one as has arrived to *this Pitch*, lives in *Peace*, and dies with *Assurance*, and, at the appearance of our Lord, shall be presented *faultless before the Presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy*, Jude 24.



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ESSAY the Third.

Of REPENTANCE.

CHAP. I.

Of Repentance in General.



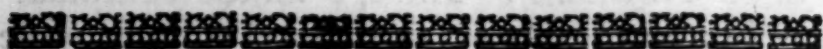
THE plain and express Condition, upon which the Gospel promises Salvation to all Men, is *Obedience* or a *Holy Life*. The Time from which this Holy Life is to begin, is either *Baptism* or *Confirmation*; that is, *the Time when* those who are either at riper Years converted to the Christian Religion, or have from their Infancy been brought up in the Profession of it, *come to a clear and distinct Knowledge of their Duty*. That from *this Period* every Man is obliged to persevere in a constant Course of Holiness; that is, in a *continual*

continual and sincere, tho' weak and imperfect Obedience to all the Commands of God, the Gospel plainly declares to us. And that the glorious Rewards of Heaven should be *at all* promised to so small a Service, as the imperfect Obedience which weak, sinful, degenerate Man should be able to perform ; is the Purchase of the Price of the Blood of the Son of God, and the Effect of the infinite Riches of the Divine Mercy made known to us by Christ. Had God therefore to those who had once been received to the Mercy of the Gospel, and had once been *made partakers of the Heavenly Gift*, Heb. vi, 6. and had *tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come*, allowed no more Remission for *wilful and presumptuous Sins* ; but accepted those only, who having once *washed their Garments in the Blood of the Lamb*, Rev, i, 5, 7, 14, should from thenceforward keep themselves in a Gospel-Sense pure and undefiled ; yet had his Mercy been infinitely greater, than sinful Man could have deserved or expected. But such is the earnestness of God's Desire to make his Creatures Happy, and such the abundance of the Grace made known by the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; that even to those who having been already admitted to the Mercy and Favour of the Gospel, and having received the Promise of a great and glorious Reward upon the Condition of an easie and
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most reasonable Obedience, and having been indued with the Earnest of his Holy Spirit, shall notwithstanding relapse *after all this* into wilful and deliberate Sins ; even to these, I say, he has yet further granted, that if by a solemn Repentance they shall again unfeignedly renew their Obedience, and from *that Period* persevere in well-doing to the end, they shall yet attain to the Reward of the Faithful ; and shall be saved as *Fire-brands plucked out of the Fire*, or as Men escaping upon a *Plank after Shipwreck*.

2. By *Repentance* therefore I would all along in this *Essay* be understood to mean, not *that* Repentance which is the constant Duty of all Christians ; (who are indeed continually bound to repent in general of all those Slips and Infirmities, those Defects and Surprises, which by the Condition of the Gospel-Covenant are most readily pardoned :) For this Repentance is not properly a new Period or Beginning of a Holy Life ; but a necessary and continued Part of that imperfect Obedience, which Man in this degenerate State is capable of performing, and which God has in his Gospel declared that he will always accept instead of perfect Innocence. But by *Repentance* I here understand *that* Repentance, which is an intire change of Heart and Mind, a *turning from Darknes to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God*. Whereby those who by *wilful and dreadful* Sins have
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left their first Estate, and forfeited their Title to the Crown of Righteousness, are to begin anew their Obedience, in order to recover the Mercy and Favour of God. And, that no one may be perplexed with vain Scruples, and unreasonable Fears ; this Repentance is such as plainly no Man is obliged to, but those who are guilty of great and deliberate Sins ; of Blasphemy, Perjury, open Prophaneness, or contempt of Religion ; of Murder, Sedition, Theft, manifest and designed Injustice, Hatred, Fraud, Wrong, or Oppression ; of Adulteries, Fornications, Uncleannesses, or habitual Drunkenness and Intemperance ; or some other Sins either maliciously wilful or notoriously habitual.



CHAP. II.

That God allows Repentance even to the greatest of Sinners.

I. **I**N the Primitive Church there was a Sect of Men, who, upon a mistaken Interpretation of some Passages of the *Epistle* of St Paul to the *Hebrews*, contended that there was no more place of Repentance allowed to those who after Baptism should fall into any of these *wilful and deliberate Sins*. They taught, that in Baptism indeed all manner of Sin and Blasphemy whatsoever, was forgiven Men absolutely

ly, and wash'd away by the Blood of Christ; but that, if after that great Remission they sinned again *wilfully and presumptuously*, they could no more obtain any further Pardon, than the Death of Christ, that great Sacrifice for Sin, could be repeated; and that therefore, however they should sincerely repent, yet there now remained nothing more for them, but a *certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation, which should devour the Adversary*, Heb. x, 27. But that this was a great Mistake; and that God *does* admit even the greatest of Sinners, upon their true Repentance, to Forgiveness and Pardon, is evident both from the *Nature of God*, and the *Design of Christianity*; from the *Practice of the Apostles*, and from the *general Sense of the Primitive Church*.

2. God is a Being, as of infinite *Purity and Holiness*, so also of infinite *Goodness and Mercy*: And as he cannot possibly be reconciled to Men, so long as they continue wicked; so whenever they cease to be so, and return again to the *Obedience of God's Commands*, and to the *Imitation of his Nature*, we cannot suppose but that he will again admit them to his Pardon and Favour. Goodness and Mercy are our most *natural* Notions of God; and the Discoveries which he hath made of himself by *Revelation*, are most exactly agreeable thereto. At the passing by of his Glory before *Moses*, he proclaimed himself,

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The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in Goodness and Truth, forgiving Iniquities, Transgressions and Sins, Exod. xxxiv, 6. By the Prophets he declares and swears by himself, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live, Ezek. xxxiii, 11. And above all, by that stupendous Instance of Mercy, the sending his only Son out of his Bosom to give himself a Sacrifice for the Sins of Men, he has discovered such an earnest desire of our Reconciliation and Salvation, as will be the everlasting Subject of the Praises of Men, and the Admiration of Angels. If therefore God, when he had made a Covenant of perfect Obedience, and had not promised Pardon at all to great and presumptuous Sins, did yet give Pardon, and declare also to the Jews by his Prophets, that he would do so: And if, when Men were yet Enemies to him, he was so willing that not any one should Perish, but all should come to Repentance, 2 Pet. iii, 9; yea, so desirous to have all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth; that he not only spared not his own Son, 1 Tim. ii, 4, to deliver him up for us all; but tells us even of Joy in Heaven at a Sinners accepting the gracious Terms of the Gospel; and represents himself as a tender Father running to meet his returning Prodigal, and falling upon his Neck and kissing him:

him: If this, I say, was the Compassion which God shewed to Man, in his first sinful and miserable State; 'tis *very reasonable* to conclude and hope, that his Mercy is not so entirely exhausted at once, but that the same Pity may be yet further extended even to those also, who *after the Knowledge of the Truth*, having been seduced by the Temptations of the World and the Devil to depart from God and to forsake their Duty, shall again return unto him with Sincerity and Perseverance.

3. The Design of the Gospel is to *teach us to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in this present World*, Tit. ii, 12. And certainly, whensoever it comes to have this effect upon a Man, it gives him a Title to the *blessed Hope*, and a well-grounded Assurance of Mercy at the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. The Foundation of the Christian Dispensation, upon which the whole Sum of Affairs is now established, is *Faith and Repentance*: And whensoever a Man so truly repents, as to purify himself effectually from every evil Work, and *by the Spirit mortifies the Deeds of the Body*, he shall certainly live, Rom. viii, 13. Our Saviour himself gives express Directions, when a Man's Christian Brother trespasses against him, to use all possible means to reclaim him, both by private and publick Reproof, before he rejects him utterly as a *Heathen Man and a Publican*.

lican. He commands us, though our *Brother* sins never so often against us, yet if he turns again and repents, to forgive him; and has promised upon this Condition, that *we* also shall in like manner find forgiveness at the Hands of God. And in the Epistle sent by the Apostle St *John* to the Bishops of the Seven Churches of *Asia*, he exhorts them earnestly to *remember from whence they were fallen, and to repent, and be zealous, and do their first Works*, Rev. ii, 5; And promiseth, that if upon this Invitation any Man would *hear his Voice, and open the Door*; that is, would be moved by these Exhortations to repent and amend; he would *come in to him and sup with him*, Rev. iii, 20; that is, would again receive him to his Mercy and Favour.

4. Accordingly the *Writings of the Apostles*, though directed to Christians, are yet full of earnest Exhortations to Repentance. And their History contains many Instances of those who after great Falls were thereby restored to their first State. St *Peter* exhorts *Simon Magus*, who thought the Gift of God could be bought with Money, to *repent of this his Wickedness*; and gives him encouragement to hope, that he should thereupon obtain forgiveness, *Acts* viii, 22. St *John* tells us, that if any Man sin, *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins*, 1 John, ii, 2. St *James* tells us, that if any one err from the

Truth,

Truth, and one convert him ; he that converteth the Sinner from the Error of his way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall bide a multitude of Sins, Jam. v, 20. St Jude advises us to have compassion of some, making a Difference ; and to save others with fear, pulling them out of the Fire, ver. 23. St Paul exhorts Timothy, to instruct in meekness those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth ; and that they may recover themselves out of the Snare of the Devil, who are taken Captive by him at his Will, 2 Tim. ii, 25. He advises the Galatians, that if any Man be overtaken in a fault, they which are spiritual should restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness, considering themselves, lest they also be tempted, Gal. vi, 1. He threatens the Corinthians to excommunicate those who had sinned, and had not repented of their Uncleanness and Fornication, and Lasciviousness, which they had committed, 2 Cor. xii, 21 ; And even the Incestuous Person, who had been guilty of such a Sin as was not so much as named among the Heathens themselves, he delivers indeed to Satan for the Destruction of the Flesh, but it was that the Spirit might be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. v, 5. For when the punishment which was inflicted of many, had been sufficient to reduce him to Repentance, he writes to the Church to forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be

swallowed up with overmuch Sorrow, 2 Cor. ii, 7.

5. And this, (excepting, as I have said, one Sect of Men,) was the constant Doctrine and Practice of the Primitive Church. To those who were yet Innocent, they thought indeed no Promises too great, and no Threatnings too severe, whereby they might make them infinitely careful to preserve their Innocence: But those who had already sinned, they encouraged to repent; and upon their Repentance admitted them again to the Peace of the Church, and to the Assurance of Pardon. They taught, that *the Holy Word and Church of God, always admitted of true Repentance: That he that had fallen, might yet recover and escape, if he repented truly of what was past, and for the future amended his Life, and made satisfaction to God: That God not only gave full Remission of Sins in Baptism, but allowed also to those, who should afterward sin, a further place of Repentance: That to every one who heartily and sincerely repents, God readily sets open a Door of Pardon, and the Holy Spirit returns again into a Mind purified from the Pollutions of Sin: That all Men who repent, even those who by reason of their great Sins did not deserve to have found any more Pardon, shall be saved; because God out of his great Compassion will be patient towards Men, and keep the Invitation which he hath made by his Son: That God will judge every Man in the Condition*

tion he finds him ; And that therefore, as it will nothing avail a Man to have been formerly Righteous, if he at last grows wicked ; so one who has formerly lived wickedly, may afterwards by Repentance and renewed Obedience, blot out his past Transgressions, and attain to the Crown of Virtue and Immortality.

6. Thus that God admits even the greatest of Sinners to Repentance, is evident both from the Nature of God and the Design of the Gospel, from the Practice of the Apostles and from the constant Doctrine of the Primitive Church. But then to make this Repentance such, as will be acceptable to God, and effectually available to obtain Pardon, there are several considerable Circumstances required. And these I think may be reduced to these Three ; First, That it must be *Early* ; Secondly, That it must be *Great* ; and Thirdly, That it must be *Constant and Persevering in its Effects*.



CHAP. III.

That true Repentance must be Early.

1. **FIRST**, That Repentance may be true and available to obtain pardon, it is necessary that it be *Early* ; that is, the Sinner must forsake his Vices so timely, as to

obtain the Habits of the contrary Virtues, and to live in them: Otherwise he can have no security *that his Repentance is hearty*; or, if it be, *that it will be accepted by God.*

2. First, We can never have any security that a late Repentance is *heartly and sincere*. A Man may very well, at the amazing approach of Death and Judgment, be extreamly sorry that he has lived wickedly; he may strongly wish that he *had* lived the Life of the Righteous; and resolve, if he were to live over again, that he *would* do so; and yet all this may be meerly the *Passion*, and not at all the *Duty* of Repentance. The *Duty of Repentance*, is an *entire change of Mind*, and an *effectual Reformation of Life*: But the *Passion of Sorrow and Remorse*, is such as accursed Spirits shall be for ever tormented with in vain; and such as a dying Penitent can never be secure that his late Repentance will exceed. Many upon a Bed of Sickness, have made all the *holy Vows* and *pious Resolutions* that could be desired; nay, perhaps there is hardly any wicked Man, who, when he thinks he is about to die, does not desire and design to amend: Yet how few are there of these, who if they recover, do ever make good those Vows and Resolutions? And no late Penitent can ever be sure, that this would not be his own Case. When an habitual Sinner is *in Time* convinced of the evil of his ways, and resolves and endeavours in earnest to reform, while he

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has Life, and Health, and Strength to do it; yet seldom does he at the first trial work himself up to such an effectual and prevailing Resolution against his Sin, as to change his whole course of Life in an instant, and *at once deliver himself out of the Bondage of Corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God*, Rom. viii, 21. Usually he proceeds by degrees; and after many Relapses and renewed Resolutions, arrives at last to a settled and steady Course of Piety. How much less then can a late Penitent, who labours under all the contrary Disadvantages, ever be secure that his *Repentance will be sincere, and his Resolutions effectual enough to translate him at one effort from the Power of Darknes, into the Kingdom of God?*

3. For this Reason the Ancients never admitted any to the Peace and Communion of the Church, who began not their Repentance before the time of Sicknes. *Those, saith St Cyprian, who would not in time repent, and by publick Lamentation testifie their hearty Sorrow for their Sins, we utterly reject from all hope of Peace and Reconciliation, if in the time of Sicknes and Danger they begin to intreat; because then it is not true Repentance for their Sins, but the fear of approaching Death, that drives them to beg for Mercy; and no one is worthy to receive any Comfort in Death, who never considered beforehand that he was to die.*

4. But, Secondly, Supposing a late Repentance to be *heartly and sincere*; yet have we no *positive and absolute Promise*, that it shall be accepted. The plain and express Condition of the Covenant established by Christ, is a *Holy Life*; that is, a constant and persevering Obedience to all the Commands of God, (in a Gospel and Merciful Sense, allowing for humane Weaknesses and Imperfections,) from the time of our Baptism or of our coming to the Knowledge of the Truth, until the end of our Lives. And the least that can possibly lay claim to the Reward promised upon this Condition, is such a Repentance, as produces the actual Obedience of at least some proportionable part of a Man's Life.

5. To say that the Original Condition of the Christian Covenant is such, that a Man may safely live wickedly all his Life, and satisfy all his Lusts and Appetites to the utmost, provided he does but leave off and forsake his Sins at the last; is really to take away the necessity of a Holy Life, and to undermine the very Foundation of all Virtue. For, considering on the one hand, how *prevailing the Custom of the World*, how *deceitful the Temptations of the Devil*, and how *powerful the Assaults of Lust and Passion* are; and on the other hand, how seldom *sudden Death* happens, and how little the *Excellency of the Christian Life* is understood; it will be hard, according to this Doctrine, to find Arguments sufficiently

sufficiently strong to move Men to repent and to reform immediately. If there be no other *danger*, but in *sudden Death*; and no greater *malignity in Sin*, than what may be cured by an *easy and short Repentance at last*; most Men will venture to be wicked at present, and trust to the Opportunities of growing better afterward. Though therefore God may possibly have reserves of Mercy, which *in event* he may exercise towards Men in their last extremity; yet *Originally* 'tis certain the Gospel-Covenant gives no Assurance of Comfort, but either to a *constant and persevering Holiness*, or to a *Repentance evidenced by actually renewed Obedience*.

6. At Baptism indeed, or whenever we first come to the Knowledge of the Truth, all past Sins are so entirely forgiven and washed away by the Blood of Christ, that Repentance, though it has no time to evidence it self in the Fruits of Righteousness, is without all Controversie available to Salvation. But when Men who have by Baptism Covenanted solemnly with God for a holy Life, and confirmed that Covenant by other repeated Promises and Resolutions, shall yet wilfully live in Sin; and notwithstanding the express Threatnings of our Saviour and his Apostles, that they who do so *shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*; notwithstanding the earnest Exhortations and Warnings of God's Ministers; and notwithstanding the perpet-

tual Reproaches of their own Conciences, will continue obstinately to do so; such Persons have no reason in the World to expect, that God will at last accept their *late, unactive, and ineffectual* Repentance. The *penitent Thief* was received by our Saviour, as any other Infidel undoubtedly may be, who towards the end of his Life is convinced of the Truth of the Christian Religion, and heartily embraces it: But there is nothing like a Promise in Scripture, that the *unactive* Repentance of a *Christian*, who has lived all his Life in notorious Wickedness, shall be accepted at the Hour of Death. The *Labourers* who were hired into the *Vineyard* at the Eleventh Hour, received indeed the same Wages with them that had born the Burden and Heat of the Day; But our Saviour has no where promised, that baptized and professed Christians, who are hired into the *Vineyard* in the Morning, if *they* riot away all the Day in Idleness and Wickedness, shall at Night be accepted for their professing their Sorrow that they have not worked.

7. Let those Men consider these Things, who resolve *now* to enjoy the *Pleasures of Sin* for a Season, and hope *hereafter* by a late Repentance to get a share also in the *eternal Rewards of Virtue*. Let them consider that they *may* be cut off in the midst of their Hopes; or that they *may* be as unwilling to repent hereafter, as they are at present: But *above all,*

all, let them consider, that though they *should* live to that time, when they shall be willing to leave their Sins, because the Strength of their Temptations will cease ; yet they cannot be sure, that *God* will then accept them. The expresse Condition of the Gospel is, that we seek *first* the Kingdom of God, that *we deny* our selves, and that we *overcome* the World. How slender therefore must be the Hopes of those, who spend their *Life and Strength* in the Enjoyments of *this World*, and make *Religion* not their *first*, but their *last* Refuge ? Are the Glories of Heaven so inconsiderable ? Or is the Duty we owe to God so small, that he should accept our coldest and most unwilling Service ? *Offer the Blind for Sacrifice ; offer the Lame and Sick ; offer it now unto thy Governour ; will he be pleased with thee ?* Mal. i, 7. How much less will God accept us, when we are least fit to serve him, and in those Days wherein we our selves have no Pleasure ?

8. Terrible are the Threatnings which the Scripture denounceth against those, who refuse to hear the Voice of God when he calleth, and to seek him whilst he may be found. *Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would have none of my Reproof : I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh. When your Fear cometh as De-*

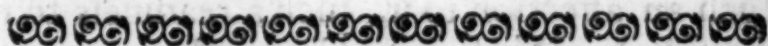
solation, and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind ; when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : For that they hated Knowledge, and did not chuse the Fear of the Lord, Prov. i, 24, &c. When the Jews whom God had saved out of the Land of Egypt, and was grieved with them forty Years in the Wilderness, and had brought them to the Borders of the promised Canaan ; despised that good Land, and refused to enter therein ; he swore unto them in his Wrath, that they should not enter into his Rest : And when afterward they resolved to go up and possess it, he suffered them not. Esau in like manner for one morsel of Bread sold his Birth-right, Heb. xii, 17 ; And afterward, when he would have inherited the Blessing, the Scripture tells us, that he was rejected ; for he found no Place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears. All which Things the Apostle declares plainly to be written for our Example ; Lest there be any Fornicator, or prophane Person among us, as Esau was ; and lest any among us tempt God, as the Jews also tempted, and fall after the same Example of Unbelief.

9. Let those therefore who have yet the Time before them, consider what they have to do. Let them be careful to hearken unto the Voice of God to Day, whilst it is called to Day. Let them be zealous to improve that

Time

Time and those Talents wherewith God has blessed them ; that when their Master cometh, he may find them *so doing*, and bid them, as having been good and faithful Servants, to enter into the Joy of their Lord.

10. The Sum of this Point is this. When a Christian has lived wickedly all his Life, and comes at his *last Extremity* to be convinced of his Folly, and to desire to amend : how far the Mercy of God may *possibly* extend it self, we *cannot* tell ; and therefore such a one is not to be *absolutely* swallowed up in *compleat* Despair. But to all those, who have yet *any* Space and Opportunity left, it ought to be strongly and perpetually inculcated, that the Gospel-Covenant allows not the *least* hopes to any other Repentance, than such as has time to evidence it self in the *actual* and *persevering* Obedience of a Holy Life.



CHAP. IV.

That true Repentance must be great : And of Penance.

1. *Secondly*, True Repentance ought to be *very Great* ; that is, he that repents, ought to affect his Mind with such a *deep Sorrow* and *Hatred* of Sin, as will put him upon those

those afflictive Duties of *Fasting, Watching, Praying, Humiliation, Liberal Alms,* and the like.

2. And the Reason of this is ; First, Because in many Cases Repentance cannot otherwise be evidenced to be real and sincere. True Repentance, is an *effectual change of Mind*, and an *actual amendment of Life* : And as a bare *change of Mind* is not an acceptable Repentance, unless it *produces* an *actual amendment of Life* ; so neither is a bare *amendment of Life*, unless it *proceeds* from a real *change of Mind*. There are many Cases, wherein a Man may leave off committing an habitual Sin, and yet not truly repent of it. Some accidental change of the Circumstances of his Life, some present worldly and temporal Interest, or some other like Cause, may restrain a Man from continuing in a customary Sin ; and yet he may retain such an affection to it, such a readiness to return to it in his former Circumstances, or at least may have so little Hatred and Resolution against it, as may make him very far from a true Penitent. In all such Cases therefore, where a Man may break off a Sin upon any other Consideration, than the Love of God and a true Sense of Religion ; 'tis necessary for the evidencing the Truth of his Repentance, and for the preserving him from imposing upon his own Mind, that he testifie his Sincerity and the Reality of his change of
Mind

Mind, by some such afflictive, laborious, or expensive Duties, as will prove him to have indeed attained such a religious temper of Mind, as would be sufficient to preserve him in the like Circumstances, from returning again to the same, or to any other the like wilful Sin. Were this rightly considered, Men would not so easily sin on securely *at present*, and impose upon themselves with vain hopes of growing better *afterward* with less Pains, when some particular Alteration of their Circumstances of Life, or perhaps Age and Sickness, shall have removed their Temptations.

3. But Secondly, When amendment of Life does alone sufficiently evidence the sincerity of Repentance (as generally and in most Cases it does,) yet ought those who have sinned, to do *something* to testify their Sorrow for past Offences, and to *judge themselves*, that they *may not be judged of the Lord*, 1 Cor. xi, 31. They ought to take Shame to themselves, that after having *received the Knowledge of the Truth*, and having been *made partakers of the heavenly Gift*, and having *tasted the good Word of God*, and the *Powers of the World to come*, they should again have returned to Sin and Folly. They ought to consider with Confusion of Face, the Ingratitude of having *again* committed those things, which are so hateful to God, that he has threatned to punish the *continuance*

ance in them with everlasting Destruction, and would not *once* pardon them under a less Ransom than the Blood of his only Son. And these Considerations ought to work in them that *Carefulness*, that *Indignation*, that *Fear*, that *vehement Desire*, that *Zeal*, and that *Revenge*; of which (St Paul tells us) consisteth that godly Sorrow, *which worketh Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of.*

4. Thus when St Peter had thrice denied his Master; the Consideration of the Shamefulness and Ingratitude of the thing, made him, when he thought thereon, *weep bitterly.* Thus when David had committed those crying Sins of Adultery and Murder; the Consideration of the foulness and baseness of the Fact, made him *every night wash his Bed and water his Couch with Tears*; and extorted from him those bitter Complaints, of which the greatest part of his Penitential Psalms are made up. And all the Saints, who ever fell into any notorious Sin, were very severe in their Humiliation; earnestly desiring that God would give them their Punishment in this World, *that their Spirit might be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus.*

5. For this Reason St. James advises those who had sinned, to *be afflicted, and mourn, and weep*; to *let their Laughter be turned to Mourning, and their Joy to Heaviness*; and to *humble themselves in the sight of the Lord, that he might lift them up.* And the Primitive

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tive Church always taught, That Sins committed wilfully after the Knowledge and Belief of the Truth, were to be done away with Labour and Sorrow : That such Sins were not immediately forgiven upon a Man's beginning to repent, but after he had afflicted his Soul, and humbled himself deeply, and undergone many Troubles : That the afflictive Duties of Repentance ought to bear some proportion to the Greatness of the Sin : That the Penitent ought to spend much Time in Watching, Fasting, Praying, and giving much Alms : And that by how much the more severely he judged himself here, by so much the more might he hope God would spare him, and be merciful to him hereafter.

6. 'Tis true, the Sin which the Ancients particularly respected, when they preached up the necessity of this severe Repentance, was no less than that of *denying our Saviour*. But if we consider the Matter impartially ; what great difference is there between renouncing Christianity, and living in an open and prophane Contempt of Religion ; in the Practice of manifest Injustice, Fraud and Oppression ; or in notorious and habitual Intemperance ? Only they who denied Christ, did it, being compelled by great and long Torments ; but these other Vices are committed wilfully and of choice.

7. Very great Reason therefore there is, why those who have been guilty of *great and wilful Sins*, should enjoyn themselves a *great*
and

and remarkable Repentance. But yet because after all, the *End* and *Design*, the whole *Sum* and *Life* of Repentance, is *Reformation*; therefore no Man ought to impose upon himself any other Penitential Severities, than such as are directly conducive to this main End. Ridiculous and foolish were the Penances enjoined Men in the dark and more ignorant Ages of the Church; because they neither tended to improve the Virtues of Mens own Minds, nor to make men more useful and beneficial to others: But such Penitential Exercises, as directly mortifie Mens Lusts and Passions, or lead them to be more Charitable and do more Good in the World; in these, by how much the Penitent is more strict and constant, by so much is he more secure of the *Sincerity of his Repentance*, and of the *Fulness of his Pardon*.

8. The *best* therefore, and the *greatest*, and the most *effectual* Repentance, that a Man can possibly exercise, is to endeavour to be *so much the more* careful in mortifying his Vices, and *so much the more* zealous in improving all Opportunities of doing Good, by how much he has formerly been more faulty in any Particular: And to resolve, by how much *the more* he hopes to have *forgiven* him, to *Love* so much *the more*. Let him, if he has been vanquished by any Temptation, resolve to strengthen himself so much the more against it, and to become for the future

ture the more heroically Virtuous. *He that thus endeavours to appease God; and by the Repentance, and Shame, and Sorrow of his past Faults, is spurred on to exercise greater Faith, and Virtue, and Courage; such a one, by the Assistance of God, may become a Joy to the Church, which he before made sorrowful; and shall obtain, not only the Pardon of his Sins, but also the Crown of Righteousness; saith St Cyprian.*

9. Particularly, a Penitent ought above all Things to endeavour after a *great and fervent Charity*. This is a Duty which all wise and holy Men have in all Ages thought to have an especial Efficacy to procure Pardon of Sin: And very great are the Promises which are made to it in Scripture: *Alms, saith the Son of Sirach, Eccles. iii, 30, and Charity, saith St Peter, shall cover a multitude of Sins, 1 Pet. iv, 8: And the merciful, saith our Saviour himself, shall obtain Mercy, Matt. v, 7.* Only Men must not hope by this, or any other means, to obtain a Liberty of continuing in Sin: For Charity *shall* procure forgiveness of Sins past, repented of, and forsaken; but not of Sins committed upon presumption of their being expiated thereby.

C H A P. V.

That true Repentance must be Constant and Persevering in its Effects : And of the One Repentance of the Ancients.

1. **T**Hirdly and Lastly, True Repentance must be *Constant and Persevering* in its Effects ; that is, it must put a Man into such a state, as that he will not any more return wilfully unto Sin. 'Till it arrive to this Pitch, Repentance is not true, and (however Men may deceive themselves with vain Imaginations about it,) can never be effectual to Salvation. The Condition that our Saviour expressly requires in his Gospel, is a continued Holy Life from the time of our knowing and embracing the Truth : But certainly he will never accept of any Thing less, than a Life of Holiness and Persevering Obedience from some Period of Reformation and Repentance.

2. He therefore that repents, ought to be infinitely fearful of relapsing into Sin, as one that is recovering out of a dangerous and almost mortal Sickness. Whenever he wilfully relapses, he makes his Case worse than it was at first, and his Disease more in danger of being mortal ; it becomes much harder for him to renew himself unto Repentance, and much more difficult to procure Pardon.

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3. 'Tis true, evil Habits are not to be rooted out at once, and vicious Customs to be overcome in a moment. So long therefore as a Man does not return wilfully and deliberately into the Habit of Sin, many Surprizes and Interruptions in the struggle with a customary Vice, may be consistent with the *Progress* of Repentance: But 'tis *then* only that it becomes *complete and effectual*, when the evil Habit is so entirely rooted out, that the Man thence-forward obeys the Commandments of God without looking back, and returns no more to the Sins he has condemned.

4. Let no Man therefore think, that he has truly repented of any deadly Sin, so long as he continues to practice and repeat it. *He that washeth himself after the touching of a dead Body, if he touch it again, what availeth his washing? So is it for a Man that fasteth for his Sins, and goeth again and doeth the same, who will hear his Prayer? Or what doth his humbling profit him? Eccles. xxxiv, 25.* He may fast, and pray, and lament, and use all the apparent signs of Repentance imaginable; but God will never esteem his Repentance true, nor accept it as available to the forgiveness of Sin, 'till he sees it *Pure, and Constant, and Persevering.*

5. And this I understand to be the Reason, why the Ancient Church never allowed but *one* Repentance after Baptism. They taught, that *if any one after that great and holy Calling*
should

should be tempted by the Devil, and sin, he had one space of Repentance; but if he should often Sin and Repent, it would not profit him; for he should hardly live unto God. They taught, that Man covenanted with God in Baptism for a Holy Life; but God foreseeing the weakness of Man, and the subtilty of the Devil, made Provision, that if any one, after that great and solemn Covenant, should either by the Violence or Deceitfulness of Temptation, be drawn into gross and deadly Sin, he should still have another place of Repentance; but if after this he continued to go on in a Circle of Sinning and Repenting, that then he was to be looked upon as no other than a Heathen and an Infidel, only as he differed in the wilfulness and in the guilt of his Sin. And according to this Doctrine did they constantly deal with their Penitents; always admitting those that repented, to the Peace and Communion of the Church once; but if afterward they sinned oftner, and pretended to Repent, excluding them utterly.

6. Now by this 'tis plain they did not mean, that if any one sinned and repented, and, after that, sinned again; that such a one was utterly lost, and absolutely excluded from all hope of finding further Mercy and Pardon with God. For though the Church wisely appointed, that a place of publick Repentance for great and scandalous Sins should be allowed but once, lest the Remedy, by being made too easie, should grow useles and contemptible; (as afterward

terward by Experience it was found to do;) yet no Man presumed to set Limits to the Mercy and Forgiveness of God. And therefore they always exhorted and encouraged Men to repent, so long as they had Life and Health. Let us Repent, saith St Clement, whilst we are yet upon Earth: For we are as Clay in the hand of the Potter. For as the Potter, if he make a Vessel and it be misshaped in his Hands or broken, forms it anew; but if he has gone so far as to throw it into the Furnace of Fire, he can no more remedy it: So we, while we are in this World, let us repent with our whole Heart, of all the Evil we have done in the Flesh, that we may be saved by the Lord. For, after we shall have departed out of this World, we shall have no Place to confess our Sins, or to repent any more.

7. The Primitive Church therefore, I say, by allowing but One Repentance for great Crimes committed after Baptism, did not mean that true Repentance would at any time be in vain or unacceptable in the sight of God. But because Repentance never is true and effectual, till it restore a Man to such a state of new Obedience, that he will not wilfully fall into gross and scandalous Sins any more; and because he that having once done long and publick Penance for a gross and scandalous Crime, did yet afterward fall into the same or the like again, could not possibly give any greater Evidence of the Sincerity of his Repentance

pentance to the Church, than he had done before; therefore they did not think fit to admit such relapsed Criminals to the Peace and Communion of the Church any more, lest they should again give occasion to blaspheme the Name of Christ and his Holy Religion.

8. Thus infinitely solicitous were those holy Men, not to give Men the least possible encouragement to continue in Sin, and yet very careful at the same time not to drive any Man to Despair. Let us consider these Things; and while we rightly maintain that true Repentance cannot at any time be in vain or ineffectual to procure Pardon, let us be careful not to entertain any such Notions of Repentance, as will take away the Necessity of a Holy Life, and of that Persevering Obedience, which is the express and indispensable Condition of the Gospel-Covenant.

THE END.



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